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**The Political Economy of Public Participation in Decision
Making in Rural Development in Malaysia**

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‘Indeed, along with hardship, there is ease’

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Abstract

Public participation in decision making is commonly proposed and implemented by international governmental organisations, development experts, policy makers and leaders in less developed countries as a feasible approach to encourage people's involvement in their own economic and development affairs. This has led to the development of various strategies to understand the extent of public participation in decision making. However, the common strategies used are inadequate to explain the lack of public participation in decision making in the context of Malaysia. This thesis investigates the process and extent of public participation in decision making in a rural development programme, the Visionary Capability Movement Programme or *Gerakan Daya Wawasan* (GDW). A political economy methodology is employed along with power and empowerment theories for analysing the ways in which policies can be influenced by the choices made between institutions and the study focuses on locating policy development and its implementation firmly in the context of Malaysia from the economic and political perspectives. Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with twelve policy makers and implementers at the macro- and meso-levels, and with thirty-nine local villagers at the micro-level. The findings show clearly that the lack of public participation occurred at these three crucial levels and was ultimately due to the failure of the central government - which had not pursued policies which would guarantee participation, but wanted to avoid the responsibility by transferring power to the local villagers. It also failed to address the highly top-down implementation at the meso-level because all decisions were made without any consultation with the local people. The findings also show that the highly unequal power relations within the villages allowed the leaders of the villages to use the GDW to reinforce their own power which contributed to the lack of public participation. The thesis contributes to bridging a theoretical gap by using power and empowerment theories to understand public participation in decision making and in emphasising the three critical levels - macro, meso and micro - based on a political economy perspective as a framework for understanding public participation in decision making. Empirical evidence from two case-study villages is set out, exposing the extent to which local villagers participated in decision making which puts much emphasis on the important roles of public officials, the local leader (the VDSC) and local villagers.

Declaration

I, Nor Ardyanti Ahmad, declare that this thesis titled: The Political Economy of Public Participation in Decision Making in Rural Development in Malaysia is my own work. This work has not been submitted for any degree at the University of Sheffield, or any other, university.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Nor Ardyanti Ahmad', written over a light blue horizontal line.

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List of Abbreviations

ADS1M	<i>Anugerah Desa Sejahtera 1 Malaysia</i>
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BCIC	<i>Bumiputera Commercial and Industrial Community</i>
CDD	Community Development Department
DFID	Department for International Department
ECLA	Economic Commission for Latin America
EPU	Economic Planning Unit
EU	European Union
FELCRA	Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority
FELDA	Federal Land Development Authority
GAD	Gender and Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDW	<i>Gerakan Daya Wawasan</i>
GNP	Gross National Product
GR	Green Revolution
HD	Human Development
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report
HICOM	Heavy Industries Corporation of Malaysia Berhad
HYV	High Yield Varieties
IGOs	International Governmental Organisations
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INFRA	Institute for Rural Development Malaysia
IRDP	Integrated Rural Development Programme

ISI	Import-Substitution Industrialisation
JENGKA	Jengka Regional Development Authority
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KEDA	Kedah Regional Development Authority
KEJORA	Southeast Johor Development Authority
KESEDAR	South Kelantan Development Authority
KETENGAH	Terengganu Tengah Development Authority
LDAs	Land Development Authorities
LDCs	Less Developed Countries
MADA	Muda Agriculture Development Authority
MAFI	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industries
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
MRD	Ministry of Rural Development
MRRD	Ministry of Rural and Regional Development
NAP	National Agricultural Policy
NDP	National Development Policy
NEP	New Economic Policy
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NVP	National Vision Policy
OECD	Economic Cooperation and Development
OECF	Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund
OPPs	Outline Perspective Plans
PILB	Rural Development Master Plan
PPRT	<i>Projek Perumahan Rakyat Termiskin</i>

PRSPs	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
RDAs	Regional Development Authorities
RED	Rural Economic Development
RIDA	Rural and Development Authority
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TNCs	Transnational Corporations
UMNO	United Malay National Organisation
UN	United Nations
UNCED	UN Conference on Environment and Development
UNDESA	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VDSC	Village Development Security and Committee
WAD	Women and Development
WB	World Bank
WID	Women in Development
WTO	World Trade Organisation
YDPA	Yang di-Pertuan Agong

Chapter 1

Introduction

In the first half of 2020, world economic growth was estimated to reach 3.3% (International Monetary Fund (IMF), 2020). In percentage terms, East and South Asian were the biggest contributors to this global growth, although it was unevenly distributed across countries (United Nations (UN), 2018). This was perhaps due to fluctuations in commodity prices and unstable political conditions, especially in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. Yet, the total number of people living in extreme poverty was 750 million in 2017 (UN, 2018, 2019) and the income inequality has been projected to increase in most countries (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), 2020). It was projected that a quarter of these people might remain in extreme poverty by 2030, which suggests that something was wrong with the international strategies for combating poverty. These stark facts show the severity of poverty throughout the world: poverty is a chronic phenomenon and effective development strategies to reduce it are urgently required.

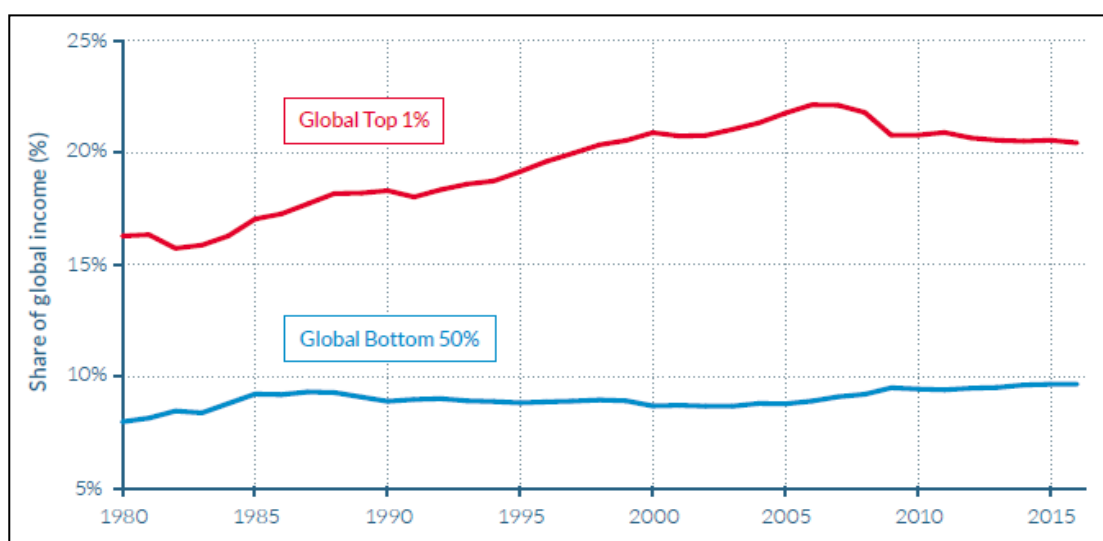
International governmental organisations (IGOs) such as the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have a role as responsible institutions to tackle this chronic problem. Since the failure of the Washington Consensus, these IGOs have continued to develop new economic strategies which were expected to increase economic growth and be accepted as a basic tenet of economic thinking and management. This has led to the emergence of neo-liberal globalisation which can best be described as achieving entrepreneurial independence and skills in the context of 'strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade' (Harvey, 2005, p.2). However, these strategies have been heavily criticised for limiting the functions of the state and providing greater power to the market because they minimise state intervention and reduce the state to acting merely as a facilitator to the

market (Hay, 2007; Purcell, 2009). So the role of the state in terms of socio-economic development was reduced and people were encouraged to be self-dependent. This is because the policy encouraged individual attainment based on a business morality, even if the individual is constrained by social structural factors such as, class discrimination and culture. What each individual needed to do was to be responsible for every action taken and for their own well-being; the basis of the concept of self-dependence.

This policy was heavily promoted by the IGOs to address the macro-economic problems faced by developing countries (Walker, 2005, 2018) and the IGOs valued market exchange as 'an ethic in itself, capable of acting as a guide to all human action, and substituting for all previously held ethical beliefs' (Harvey, 2005, p.3). With this belief, several strategies and institutional reforms were introduced to be followed by the less developed countries (LDCs), for instance minimal state intervention, privatisation, deregulation, decentralisation, reduced government budgets for social welfare and the reduction of tariffs (Harvey, 2005, 2007; Hay, 2007; Haque, 1999). The neo-liberal theorists believed that these strategies would help to preserve the effective functioning of markets and increase local primacy in making decisions. This policy also encouraged LDCs to embrace global markets and benefit from globalisation by engaging with information technology, on the assumption that this would remove trade barriers imposed by the government (Hoogvelt, 1978).

However, the neo-liberal globalisation strategies pursued by the IGOs had a disastrous impact on LDCs rather than a positive one, especially in the social aspects. Reductions in public expenditure on education and health were widespread, the poverty rate and income inequalities increased and the policies also weakened collective action because of customer-centred governance (Haque, 1999, 2008). In a MarketWatch article, Stiglitz (2019) stated that even in the developed country like the United States, neo-liberal policy has contributed to 'higher inequality and less upward social mobility'. Harvey (2005, 2007) used the term 'creative destruction' for this, contending

that the neo-liberal shift merely reinstated class-dominance, which effectively meant the restoration of an elite or upper-class power. As an example, Figure 1.1 shows the stagnation of income growth of the global bottom 50% while the share of the top 1% income group continued to increase (with a slight decline after 2000). This income inequality indicates that the current situation is highly problematic and that further programmes and campaigns are needed in order to enable people to ‘live decently and with dignity, in work, out of work and in older age’ (Walker and Walker, 2011, p.278).



Source: WID - World Inequality Database, 2017, p.7

Figure 1.1: The Growth of the Global Top 1% and the Global Bottom 50%, 1980-2015

In regions such as in Asia, Africa and Latin America, welfare deteriorated because of the withdrawal of food subsidies, reductions in social programmes and cuts in government spending on health and education (Banerjee, 2015; Haque, 2008; Hoogvelt, 2001; Tan, 2012; Kydd and Dorward, 2004; Patnaik, 2007). Even so, these problems did not stop the implementation of neo-liberal policies and the IGOs extensively promoted public participation in decision making as guidance in assistance interventions in many LDCs (Hoogvelt, 1978; Mohammed, 2016; Walker, 2005, 2018).

Because of the negative consequences of neo-liberal policies experienced by most LDCs, contemporary theories of development began to point to a political compromise between the principles of economic growth (neo-liberalism) and human development (HD) at the national and the international levels (Chapter 2). This political compromise can be seen in the common decentralisation of authority to state and local levels (Bardhan, 2002; Crook, 2003) and the focus on 'poverty reduction', 'participation' and 'empowerment' (Cornwall and Brock, 2005; Ziai, 2011). In turn, the people-centred development approach was introduced with the aim of empowering people in decision making processes (Fung and Wright, 2001; Ribot, 2007; Sen, 1999). Devolved decision making to the local level implies that citizens are no longer perceived as passive beneficiaries of policies, but that they could be involved in decision making and arrive at significant policies which are related to their needs. The right of citizens to take part in participatory activities has been widely recognised and it has become an international trend to involve people in public affairs and in the decision making process (Rowe and Frewer, 2005). This has contributed to active calls for participatory activities in which citizens need to be given more power, especially in identifying and implementing solutions to their own problems (Barber, 1984; Dryzek, 2000; Fung, 2006; Goodin, 2008; Pateman, 1970).

Public participation in decision making processes has been considered important and is related to the concept of the 'rights of citizenship and to democratic governance' (Gaventa, 2004, p.25). The research reported here was specifically concerned on public participation in decision making processes in economic and developmental issues at a local level, that is, 'a process where each individual member of a decision making body has equal power to determine the outcome of decisions' (Pateman, 1970, p.71) to 'influence decisions that affect them' (World Bank, 1992, p.27). Rowe and Frewer (2005, p.253) defined participation as the process of engaging the public in the planning, formulating policy and decision making, policy-development process of government agencies or departments activity. Public involvement in decision making processes was considered imperative for

understanding the ways in which participation connects to the ‘power structure’ and ‘political systems’ in order to achieve more transformative participation, especially in participatory development programmes (Hickey and Mohan, 2004, p.5).

The popularity of public participation owes much to the fact that it has come to be seen as a solution to problems in centralised administration and governance, and indeed as a way to improve performance in poverty reduction (Blair, 2000; Crook and Sverrisson, 2001; Manor, 1999). The participation of people in various democratic participatory activities such as voting, campaigning (Pattie *et al.*, 2004), community development, health care, planning and development, decision making and public policies is therefore considered important for improving local priority setting and ensuring that proposed programmes are appropriate to local needs (Arnstein, 1969; Rowe and Frewer, 2005). For example, existing debates have suggested that public participation in decision making deepens democracy and increases the social well-being of citizens by directing a government’s allocations to the targeted groups (Aragones and Sanchez-pages, 2009; Boulding and Wampler 2009; Geurtz and Van de Wijdeven, 2010; Ladner and Fiechter, 2012; Piper and Deacon, 2009; Schafer, 1974; Speer, 2012; Wampler, 2008; Wolfe, 1985). In some situations this generates policies which are aligned to citizens’ needs and produces further benefits such as ‘educating people, encouraging political involvement and creating empowerment’ (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004, pp.56-57). For advocates of direct participation, public participation can increase the accountability of representatives and thus enable citizens to scrutinise their actions (Craighton, 2005; Pateman, 1970). As well as encouraging participation in political activities, Oakley (1991) further argued that participation within the context of development also brings many benefits such as efficiency, effectiveness, self-reliance and coverage, which can ensure the implementation of a development project or programme.

Even though its benefits and outcomes are significant, around the turn of the twenty-first century participation within a democratic setting was criticised

because the issues which arise are not actually related to people (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993) and because of individual limitations such as time constraints and high costs of transport (Held, 2006) and people's inability to participate due to limited information (Oakley, 1991). The principal reason for this failure has been identified as people's reluctance to participate even when the opportunity to do so has been provided (Almond and Verba, 1963; Dahl, 1998). Likewise, frustration with the dominance of public officials during the deliberation process might be another reason why there is a lack of public participation in decision making. In particular, there is the risk of local elite appropriation, through which those in power can use participation as a means of fulfilling their personal interests (Mosse, 2001), thus undermining the participation process. There is evidence of situations in which participation which had been undertaken as a formulaic process 'turned out to be manipulative' (Cooke and Kothari, 2001, p.1). These 'invisible' issues have led many scholars to feel dubious about the whole notion of involving the public in the decision making process (Fishkin, 2009).

In many public participation programmes in the neo-liberal and globalised context, the most common level of public participation in decision making is pseudo-participation or non-participation (Arnstein, 1969; Cornwall, 2008; Funder, 2010; Pretty, 1995; White, 1996; Pateman, 1970, 2012). This has resulted in the failure of various government programmes. Various explanations for this have been offered (see Bishop and Davis, 2002; Lowndes *et al.*, 2001; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Pattie *et al.*, 2004; Verba, 1967). The most common conclusion was that people were powerless and that more power must be given to them (Arnstein, 1969; White, 1996; Pateman, 1970; Pretty, 1995) and that activities such as consultation, involvement, participation and control, which are related to the distribution of power, should be encouraged (Arnstein, 1969; Tunstall, 2001). This has resulted in a range of typologies, from 'good' to 'bad' (Cornwall, 2008, p.270), 'instrumental participation' to 'substantive participation' (Funder, 2010, p.1709), 'manipulative to self-mobilisation' (Pretty, 1995, p.1247) and 'nominal form to transformative form' (White, 1996, pp.7-9).

These typologies of participation are commonly used by government agencies, development experts and policy makers to measure the level of public participation and from these concepts of participation, many development strategies are formulated. This practice has been popularised by concepts such as ‘another development’ or ‘alternative development’ (Chambers, 1983; Friedmann, 1992; Oakley, 1991); it focuses on ‘bottom-up’ or ‘grass-roots’ development policies (Cohen and Uphoff, 1980; Chambers, 1983), which emphasise local participation, self-help and decentralisation (Chambers, 1983; Rigg, 1991). However, these are not the only approaches to understanding public participation because they perceive participation not as a ‘single act, but a scale of possibilities’ (Bishop and Davis, 2002, p.18). It is not possible to understand public participation in decision making as a scale of possibilities - non-participation to citizen control - because different understanding of participation are required in different contexts. Research is therefore urgently needed to assess the extent of public participation in decision making.

This thesis is an examination of the extent of public participation in decision making in current economic development and democratic governance in Malaysia. It engages with the theories of development and rural development in order to understand the different key actors who have introduced the neo-liberal globalisation policy and its relation to the principles of economic growth and human development. This requires an analysis of participation and power within the neo-liberal and globalisation political economy context. Further, this thesis develops a framework from the political economy perspective because public participation in decision making cannot be viewed only from the standard typologies, but must include the political and economic interests of all of the key actors, including villagers. This provides an alternative view of the key reasons for the lack of public participation by looking at the various key actors who are involved in the introduction of public participation and its implementation on the ground, and thus reveals the reality of public participation in practice (Chapter 6).

Before going further to discuss the parameters of this current study, this introductory chapter first offers an overview of Malaysia from the political economy perspective and the main reason why this research was conducted: the GDW Programme. Then four research questions will be set out which framed the conceptual approach used for the study; they are based on a political economy perspective and provide the setting for the empirical case studies which follow. Third, the contributions of this thesis to the existing body of knowledge will be discussed. Finally, the thesis structure will be outlined to provide an overview of the whole of this thesis.

An Overview of Malaysia

Malaysia is located in Southeast Asia and is composed of two important regions: peninsular Malaysia or *Semenanjung* and Borneo, comprising the states of Sabah and Sarawak. It is endowed with a variety of valuable commodities such as tin, timber, palm oil and rubber which had attracted the British to colonise the then Malaya in order to support industrial development in the UK at that time. During the period of colonisation, the British advised the state's rulers or *sultans* on administrative issues such as tax collection, land management and state revenues. The *sultans* only had responsibility for matters such as religion and the customs and traditions of the state. So the interest of the British administration at that time was not in developing the country but 'there were significant British financial interests in the Malay states' (Kim, 1966, p.60). In line with this interest, the political and economic development of the then Malaya was based on British policy which favoured international trade by merchants and investors in, for example, the lucrative tin mining industry and rubber production. As a consequence, the development of roads and railways in the states in the west of the peninsular progressed well; extensive farms and agricultural estates were opened and the British 'divide and rule' policy for managing the various ethnic groups in the country was strengthened (Malaysia Kita, 2004).

British involvement in the production and export of primary commodities continued even after the Second World War due to the high demand for rubber and tin which had increased British investments in those industries. This led to the continued expansion of land for farming and tin mining, and many rural Malays lost their land to the British because it was needed only for high production of the primary export commodities. To ensure that British economic interests in rubber plantations and tin mining were not affected, other farming activities such as the planting of coconut groves and other fruit plantations were restricted to specific areas (Table 1.1 shows the ownership of estates in 1938). The economic development policy both before and after independence was designed to protect the interests of the British and of elite groups such as Chinese entrepreneurs (Heng, 1988).

Table 1.1: British Malaya: Ethnic Ownership of Estates in 1938

<i>Ethnic group</i>	<i>5,000 acres and over</i>	<i>1,000-4,900 acres</i>	<i>500-999 acres</i>	<i>100-499 acres</i>
Europeans	47	467	237	245
Chinese	1	47	94	911
Indians	-	5	21	343
Others	5	13	10	63

Source: Gomez and Jomo, 1999, p.13

In 1942, a spirit of nationalism developed among educated young Malays who had studied abroad, the Malay elites and Chinese entrepreneurs who had suffered torture under the Japanese occupation (1941-1945), and the formation of the Malayan Union by the British increased the spirit of nationalism. This led to the formation of political parties, the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) and other parties in the state of Sabah and Sarawak. The UMNO, MCA and MIC, which were primarily formed on the basis of the country's multi-ethnic society, formed an alliance party in 1952 which promised to fight for Malaya's independence, and this coalition was successful in the first general election which was held in 1955. Two years after that, Malaya gained independence and, in 1963, Malaysia was formed by the

federation of Malaya, Singapore, North Borneo and Sarawak, although in 1965 Singapore seceded from Malaysia.

After independence in 1957, Malaya experienced major growth in its economy due to its primary export commodities of tin, rubber and oil palm products. In 1965, Malaysia was the world's highest exporter of natural rubber and tin, which together accounted for 55% of the nation's exports and the GDP grew at 6.4% annually between 1960 and 1965 (Government of Malaysia, 1966, p.18). Despite this growth, the standard of living of local people was not changed. Robust development and improved infrastructures could only be seen in the urban areas which had been developed first by the colonial British to serve their an economic interests, and the rural areas had lagged behind. The gap between the economic development of urban and rural areas was largely due to the 'divide and rule' policy introduced by the British which had exacerbated the identification of ethnicity based on economic function.

For example, the Malays, who worked as agricultural peasants and fisherman, by definition had to live in rural areas; they were the largest group in Malaysia and constituted over two-thirds of the country's population (69.1% as at 2018). Malays and other indigenous groups (for example Dusun, Bajau, Kadazan, Iban) are often referred as *bumiputera* ('sons of the soil') and other populations (such as the Chinese and Indians) are referred as *non-bumiputera* (immigrant populations). The Malays live principally in rural areas known as *kampung* (villages) and many of them work in various branches of agriculture. Each village is headed by a *ketua kampung* (village headman) and commonly the *ketua kampung* is of Malay ethnic origin (but if the village is inhabited predominantly by Chinese families, the *ketua kampung* will be Chinese). The *ketua kampung* is highly respected because his (it is always a man) duty is to take care of the welfare of the villagers. As well as taking on these residential responsibilities, Malays have also held higher political posts and have dominated the politics of Malaysia. This domination can be seen since Malaysia gained independence. Even so, the political power held by Malays has not been combined with economic power, notwithstanding their educational

attainment. Since independence, the majority of the country's poor have been Malays and this backwardness was believed to be due to the lack of opportunities for them in the business and economic sectors compared with the Chinese community.

The Chinese, who worked as tin miners and business people, stayed in urban areas. Unlike the Malays, the ethnic Chinese have dominated the economy of Malaysia and they are very successful in business. They are the second largest population in Malaysia, comprising 23% of the total population. Historically, Malaysia's Chinese people originated from southern provinces of China of Kwantung, Fukien and Kwangsi and their forebears had been brought in by the British to work in the mining and tin sectors (Mohamed, 1995); they mostly lived in urban areas and were actively involved in entrepreneurial ventures and most of them became traders. While Malays dominated the country's politics, the Chinese used the opportunities offered by their residential circumstances provided by the British to carry on their business activities and they were very successful in advancing their economic status compared with the other ethnic groups. In turn, many of their children had opportunities to access better education and attended urban schools in which lessons were taught in the English language. So they were successful not only economically but also in their education attainment. Hence, after independence the professional occupations such as medicine, accountancy and engineering were dominated by the Chinese Malaysians.

The Indians had been brought in by the British colonialists to work as plantation labourers and they lived on the estates. Like the Chinese, the Indians were also an immigrant population, forming the third highest population (6.9% of the total population). Compared with the other two major ethnic groups, the Indians lagged behind in both economic and political terms. Their employment as plantation labourers provided very low wages and very few opportunities in education because plantation workers' children were schooled in the Tamil language only and had no opportunities to learn other languages such as English to improve their educational mobility; English was only used for

teaching in urban schools (Singh, 2009). After independence, however, with various economic restructurings and changes in government policies in areas such as industrialisation, many Indian communities migrated to urban areas to have access to more successful jobs. Table 1.2 shows the incidence of poverty by ethnic group since 1970.

Table 1.2: Incidence of Poverty by Ethnicity, 1970-2009

	1970	1976	1979	1984	1987	1989	1992	1995	1997	1999	2002	2004	2007	2009
Malaysia	49.3	37.7	37.4	20.7	19.4	16.5	12.4	8.7	6.1	8.5	6	5.7	3.6	3.8
Ethnic														
<i>Bumiputera</i>	64.8	46.4	49.2	28.7	26.6	23	17.5	12.2	9	12.3	9	8.3	5.1	5.3
Chinese	26	17.4	16.5	7.8	7	5.4	3.2	2.1	1.1	1.2	1	0.6	0.6	0.6
Indians	39.2	27.3	19.8	10.1	9.6	7.6	4.5	2.6	1.3	3.4	2.7	2.9	2.9	2.5
Others	44.8	33.8	28.9	18.8	20.3	22.8	21.7	22.5	13	25.5	8.5	6.9	6.9	6.7

Source: Economic Planning Unit (EPU), 2016

Unlike peninsular Malaysia, the Borneo states of Sabah and Sarawak have greater diversity in terms of ethnicities, languages and tribes. Both states are separated from peninsular Malaysia by the South China Sea. These states are geographically huge and contain tropical rainforests, mountains and rivers and beautiful flora and fauna. The major exports from these states are raw petroleum, oil and gas, palm oil and timber. Despite their many exports and revenues, statistically both states nevertheless had a higher incidence of poverty; in 2012, this was 7.8% in Sabah and 2.4% in Sarawak, compared with 0.1% in the state of Malacca in the peninsular states (EPU, 2016). Major development has been concentrated in peninsular Malaysia, specifically in metropolitan cities such as Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Johor. One reason for this might be the huge geographical areas of Sabah and Sarawak and the fact that many of the inhabitants there are still living in rural areas despite the rapid urbanisation which these states have undergone (Shari and Osman-Rani, 1996).

The uneven economic development between ethnic groups and also between states contributed to the political unrest which broke out on 13 May 1969

(Jomo, 2004). Problems such as high unemployment and high poverty levels were prevalent (Gomez and Jomo, 1999). This shows that the increase in economic growth did not lead to an increase in equitable treatment. Since then, Malaysia's economic policies have changed drastically and several socio-economic policies and restructuring strategies were introduced, such as the New Economic Policy (NEP). This policy was developed to eradicate poverty and to restructure society by abolishing the identification of ethnicity with economic function. Since its inception in 1970, poverty has been reduced (Table 1.3) and the capital share among *bumiputera* has increased (Table 1.4).

Table 1.3: Reduction in the Incidence of Poverty, 1970-2002

	1970	1980	1990	1997	1999	2002
Malaysia total	49.3	29.2	16.5	6.1	7.5	5.1
Rural	58.6	37.7	21.1	10.9	12.4	11.4
Urban	24.6	12.6	7.1	2.1	3.4	2.0
Hard-core poor	-	-	3.9	1.4	1.4	1.0

Source: Jomo, 2004, p.3

Table 1.4: Ownership of Share Capital of (at par value) of Limited Companies, 1969-2004

	1969	1970	1975	1985	1990	1995	1999	2004
Bumiputera Individuals and Trust	1.5	2.4	9.2	19.1	19.2	20.6	19.1	18.7
Chinese	22.8	27.2	n.a	33.4	45.5	40.9	37.9	40.9
Indians	0.9	1.1	n.a	1.2	1.0	1.5	1.5	1.5
Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.9	0.8
Nominee Companies	2.1	6.0	n.a	1.3	8.5	8.3	7.9	9.2
Locally-Controlled Firms	10.1	-	-	7.2	0.3	1.0	-	-
Foreigners	62.1	63.4	42.9	26.0	25.4	27.7	32.7	28.8

Source: Government of Malaysia, 1996; Government of Malaysia, 2001

Despite the success of the NEP, what was intended to be an affirmative action policy has been criticised as being *pro-bumiputera*, which effectively means pro-Malay (Jomo, 2004; Tedong *et al.*, 2015) and to some extent, the 13 May 1969 tragedy was considered as 'a blessing in disguise for the Malay capitalists...to promote their interests on the economic front through the UMNO-controlled government' (Shamsul, 1986, p.191). Other criticisms were

that it had led to the growth of cronyism by providing opportunities for elite groups such as politicians, retired officers, the ruling party and politically well-acquainted business people who controlled the large companies (see Adam and Cavendish, 1995; Gomez and Jomo, 1999), and to acting in small elite groups' interests and enabling them to remain in power (Jomo and Chong, 2010).

As well as the ethnic riots, the political and economic development of Malaysia was once again challenged by international financial pressure from globalisation, liberalisation and advancements in information and communication technology (ICT). This changed the economic and development policy landscapes and shifted the country's economy, leading to the economic and cultural liberalisation (Jomo and Chong, 2010) pursued by the IGOs in order to improve the economic conditions of developing countries (Chapter 3). Several strategies were adopted to reduce the impact and accelerate improved economic conditions, such as introducing a privatisation policy, market liberalisation, the establishment of heavy industries such as the HICOM and Perwaja Steel, and the encouragement of foreign direct investments (FDIs). Malaysia was one of the first countries to privatise parts of its public sector and to liberalise the economy. Consequently, Malaysia's economic condition has 'become more integrated into global economic regimes' (Turner *et al.*, 2013, p.490).

After the end of the NEP in 1990, a more visionary policy was put forward by the then prime minister, Tun Mahathir Mohamad; this was known as Vision 2020 and was to run in parallel with the introduction of the National Development Policy (NDP), 1991-2000 (Chapter 5). This policy focused more on economic liberalisation by encouraging the involvement of the private sector in developing the country and by bringing in privatisation and deregulation policies to support that goal. However, the effect of this policy was similar to that in other developing countries which pursued neo-liberal globalisation, such as 'cuts in public expenditure, the costs of social services like education and health have been increasingly transferred to

consumers...higher university fees, payments for schools, amenities, hospital charges and medicine fees' (Gomez and Jomo, 1999, p.170).

In line with the efforts of the government towards economic liberalisation and globalisation which were the focus of Vision 2020, this policy encouraged people to be competitive, self-reliant, forward-looking, resilient, adaptive and dynamic (Chapter 5). This included being able to decide on economic developments which were related to their own affairs. This could only be done through public participation in the decision making process which would in turn empower communities to improve their standard of living and their socio-economic status. One of the participation programmes introduced to facilitate greater public involvement in decision making was the Visionary Capability Movement or *Gerakan Daya Wawasan* (GDW) Programme (in 1996 it was known as the Visionary Village Movement) which will be discussed in the next section. It is important to mention here one significant event which once again changed the political and economic landscape of Malaysia after the country's fourteenth general election on 9 May 2018; the fall of National Front political party or *Barisan Nasional* which had ruled the country for almost seven decades since independence. This opened up a new path for the country and witnessed the importance of the 'people's voice', and as at January 2020 Malaysia was led by a new coalition government known as The Alliance of Hope (*Pakatan Harapan*) political party which comprises several other parties such as People's Justice, The National Trust, Malaysian United Indigenous, Democratic Action and other parties from the state of Borneo. However, the economic and development policies of the country were once again challenged, because on March 2020, a new government of Malaysia has been formed to replace The Alliance of Hope political party. As at March 2020, not much can be evaluated and assessed because the economic and development policies of the previous government are still in force and the new government is still struggling to earn the trust of Malaysia's citizens.

The Visionary Capability Movement or Gerakan Daya Wawasan (GDW) Programme

In theory Malaysia is a decentralised country however, in practice, it is best characterised as centralised one (Huat and Chin, 2011; Anderson, 2011). The government wanted to decentralise authority to the local people, yet it maintains central control by limiting local decision making. This situation has jeopardised efforts by the government to facilitate village-level public participation through the GDW Programme. When the condition of poor people was getting worse during the last century, the then Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) developed several economic plans to fight poverty (Chapter 5). One of the economic and development plans which was developed in 1996 and still carry on today is the GDW Programme (as at May 2018). Its principal purpose is to ease the public to participate in bringing about changes to expand the living conditions and expedite economic growth in the rural areas in Malaysia by utilising the existing economic potential and new resources within their villages (Community Development Department (CDD), 2014).

For that purpose, the government has awarded RM137 million (£24,553,431) to 42 villages in 2013 (Parliament, House of Commons, 2014), in order to facilitate the economic development projects such as agriculture, local tourism, husbandry, fisheries, livestock farming, marketing and entrepreneurship at a local level. With small changes in its method of execution in 2003, yet, only 534 of the original 15,552 villages have been observed to have accomplished the main aims of the GDW in utilising the resources around them, after almost two decades of implementation of the programme (CDD, 2014). There are also villages which have been unable to plan or propose any projects or activities which would benefit them and thus the GDW has a limited impact on these rural people (Balwi, 2005). This current study was motivated by the need to examine why this situation has occurred. To address this question, a political economy perspective was used in order to

explain the extent of public participation in decision making in rural development in Malaysia's context.

Research questions

Within this global and national context this research was guided by four main questions. The first was to understand policy development at a macro-level, and the influential actors and the formal and informal institutions which were responsible for the introduction of the GDW Programme were examined:

1. Why was the Visionary Capability Movement (GDW) Programme introduced in Malaysia?

The second question focused on the implementation of the GDW Programme by the responsible officers at the federal, state and local levels. It interrogated the understanding of these officers about the Programme and how they implemented it to the local people:

2. How has the GDW Programme been implemented on the ground?

The third question investigated how local people perceived and understood the GDW Programme and the concept of participation underlying the Programme:

3. How do local villagers understand the concept of participation in decision making?

The fourth question addressed the overall process of the GDW Programme from policy development at the macro level, the meso implementation level and the practice of participation at the micro level:

4. How far has the GDW Programme succeeded as a strategy to facilitate public participation in decision making?

To address these questions, qualitative research methods were employed in order to understand the process of participation and reveal the contentions

between the rhetoric of policy development and the empirical practices of participation at local level. Data were gathered from primary and secondary sources such as documents, bulletins and reports, and in-depth interviews were conducted. This approach provided opportunities for interpreting the views held by people and at the same time cross-checking the data through secondary sources (Chapter 6).

Contribution to Knowledge

This thesis contributes to knowledge in three distinct ways: theoretical, methodological and empirical. First, it contributes to the theory of participation by offering alternative ways of understanding public participation in decision making on issues of economic development which was developed from power and empowerment theories. Instead of assessing the people-centred approach based on typologies of participation, this alternative approach embraces theories of power (Arendt, 1986; Freire, 1970; Sen, 1980) and social structure in understanding public participation in the decision making process. This helps to bridge the theoretical gap between theories of development, rural development and participation.

Second, this thesis contributes to the methodologies needed to understand public participation in decision making. The specific context of the study required a new methodological approach, thus political economy was used to locate policy development and its implementation firmly in the context of Malaysia from the economic and political perspectives, which the two major development and participation perspectives had previously neglected. This approach examines three levels of public participation: macro, meso and micro. Each of these levels is important for understanding the political and economic interests of the key actors who shape the formulation of the economic and development programme, its eventual implementation at state and local levels and the process of participation at village level.

Third, the case studies employed in this thesis contribute new empirical knowledge to the existing literature. Previous research on the GDW Programme has focused only on the village development and security committees (VDSCs) and village headmen as respondents. They were chosen from villages that were considered actively engaged in the GDW and neglected other potential respondents in less actively engaged villages. As such, this is the first study to engage directly with local villagers in the two case studies in Malaysia that cover both actively and less actively engaged villages. It reveals the gap between the policy rhetoric of public participation in decision making and the reality. This provides an answer to the question concerning the lack of public participation in decision making in the GDW Programme in Malaysia. The case studies specifically explore the features between and within the villages which limited public participation in the programme.

Thesis Structure

The thesis is divided into ten chapters, including the introduction and conclusion. Chapter 2 critically reviews theories of development. It outlines first the history of development by engaging with several mainstream development theories and contemporary developments. In mainstream development, the discussion focuses on the economic perspective which is dominated by Western-centric development. Following that discussion, dependency theory is considered by discussing the irrelevancy of economic perspectives on development and suggesting alternatives. These two mainstream development perspectives are further discussed and compared with the alternatives which are dominating development in the twenty-first century. At the end of this chapter, the discussion concludes that the current form of development is a political compromise between the principles of economic growth and human development in understanding the contemporary theories of development at the national and the international levels.

Chapter 3 discusses rural development. It begins by drawing the conditions of rural development after the Second World War. It emphasises the causes of

the lack of development and of the existence of the rural poor in many LDCs. The discussion then moves on to find a clear description of rural development in different development periods; the mainstream development approach, the structural adjustment approach and the people-centred development approach. These discussions show that the contemporary rural development focus on people-centred development is manifested through PRSPs, MDGs and SDGs. It shows that IGOs play important roles in shaping global development.

Chapter 4 critically analyses the theories of participation and power. The first section outlines the typologies of participation put forward by various authorities such as Arnstein's ladder of public participation (1969), Pateman's (1970), Pretty's typologies (1995) and White (1996). These typologies are widely used by development experts, policy makers and government agencies to understand the level of public participation. The discussion is followed by a consideration of the concept of power and empowerment. The major arguments are made through a discussion of the three faces of power proposed by Lukes (1974, 2005) and the alternative views of power put forward by Arendt (1986) and Freire (1970). In contemporary discussions of power in development, the focus is on Sen's (1980) capability approach to understanding the empowerment of people in their own development. Both of these theories of participation and power were significant bases for setting up the framework of this thesis.

Chapter 5 follows with a discussion of an overview of economic development policies in Malaysia. This development policy frames the rural development programmes in the second section of this chapter. It discusses several strategies to address the problem of poverty in rural areas based on the different periods of national development policies since Malaysia gained independence. The discussion then turns to the agenda of rural development; the GDW Programme. Following that, the discussion mainly focuses on the emergence of the GDW since its inception in 1996. This provides an explanation of the rhetoric behind the policy developed at central government level and its local reality.

Chapter 6 moves on to discuss the methodology and methods which guided the empirical research. It justifies the use of a political economy perspective as a conceptual framework for understanding the economic and development policy in Malaysia and rejects the positivist position. The discussion is then followed by an explanation and justification of the specific research methods employed in this study. Qualitative research was used as the most appropriate strategy for understanding public participation at the local level and the selection of two case studies is explained. The final section considers the ethical procedures followed in conducting this study.

Chapters 7 and 8 discuss the results of the empirical research in Malaysia. Chapter 7 presents the results of the analysis of the reasons for the introduction of the GDW Programme and the interviews with policy makers at central and state government levels. The interviews revolved around examining why the GDW was introduced rather than other programmes. The second sets of interviews were conducted with the policy implementers at central, state and district levels. These interviews were conducted in order to understand how the GDW has been implemented on the ground. This involved several policy implementers who were directly and indirectly involved in the implementation of the GDW. Both policy makers and implementers play important roles in the formulation and implementation of the GDW in Malaysia.

Chapter 8 critically examines the empirical research in the two case studies. The case studies are important to the examination of how local people understand public participation in decision in rural development programme. Interviews were conducted with local villagers living in Kedah state and with the local leaders and local villagers. The findings suggest that there was no participation of local people in either of the case-study villages. This reveals the gap between the rhetoric of public participation in decision making and reality.

Chapter 9 brings the discussion together by integrating the findings from Chapters 7 and 8 with the literature reviewed earlier. The political economy

perspective is used to understand the whole process and to answer the final research question. The first and second sections of the chapter review the findings from Chapters 7 and 8. This is then followed by a discussion of the findings to answer the final research question and to integrate it with the political economy perspective. Chapter 10 concludes by summarising how the research questions have been answered and recapitulates the contribution of the thesis to the body of knowledge. This is then followed by a discussion of the implications for policy, and possible directions for future research.

Chapter 2

Theories of Development

Introduction

This chapter critically reviews development theories as essential context to the specific case of Malaysian development. It explains the chronology of the mainstream theories, specifically modernisation and dependency theories. Modernisation theorists believed that the development of a society depends on economic growth in order to assist the economic transformation. It requires the traditional society to emulate the Western-style values which were proposed by the western scholars. Thus, the first part of this section describes how transition from traditional society to modern society, and economic growth, enables the development of countries and what the outcomes of these strategies are. Dependency theorists, however, contended that development depends on capital accumulations, investments and centre-peripheral relationships. They believed that altering international politics and economic structures are the key development. Thus, the second part of this section explains how dependency theory arises with a specific focus on the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) policies in import substitutions and capital accumulations. Then it discusses the ideas of dependency theory that emphasise centre-periphery relationship which explain the ‘development of underdevelopment’ situation. In the movement from mainstream development theories in the post-war period to alternative theories, it is imperative to examine the former, in terms of their origins, outcomes and criticisms, and then move to examine alternative development, post-development and the new development paradigm in the last section of this chapter.

The focus of development prior to the First World War was on economic growth and it emphasised the role of the market and the role of the state (Brohman,

1996; Larrain, 1989; Peet, 1991; Preston, 1996; Rist, 2002; Rondinelli *et al.*, 1983). However, after the Second World War many development theorists were interested in explaining conditions for development especially in newly industrialising countries, and this contributed to a range of different perspectives (Larrain, 1989; Preston, 1996; Rapley, 2007), and it can be divided into two mainstream post-war theories of development, modernisation and dependency.

Modernisation Theory

The emergence of modernisation theory in the 1950s and 1960s can be explained by the competition between the United States (US) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) to dominate the world economic system after the Second World War. They were the two dominant powers: a liberal group, the US and other organisation for economic cooperation and development (OECD) countries, and a communist group led by the USSR (Preston, 1996). The political concerns of the US about its new role as a superpower after the collapse of European power in the Second World War led to its active role in providing aid to the Less Developed Countries (LDCs) (Leys, 1996; Melkote *and* Steeves, 2001) and the USSR was also playing its own role in assisting LDCs through its aid programme (Myrdal, 1971; Rist, 2002). This was further emphasised:

The mainstream framework of growth and modernisation theory both arose in the context of Cold War competition between superpowers for influence in the south: the US and other OECD countries offered capitalist growth and modernisation to counter the Soviet Union's proposal for socialist development (Oman and Widnaraja, 1991, p.3).

The aid programme strategy was used by both the US and the USSR in order to try to lead the world economy in the post-war period (Preston, 1996). After the success of the aid programme in rehabilitating the economies of Europe, 'bilateral and international aid organisations turned their attention increasingly to poorer nations of the world that had never attained high levels

of industrial production' (Rondinelli *et al.*, 1983, p.25). The historical experience of developed countries that associated development with the economic growth was then offered to help speed up the transition of LDCs into modern capitalist economies and liberal democracies by sharing their knowledge, values and norms with those countries such as South Korea, Latin America and African countries (Apter, 1965; Leys, 1996; Simpson, 1994). The mushrooming expertise of development theorists influenced policy makers and international donors to focus on strategizing policies which enabled the LDCs to progress according to the values of the developed countries (Lipton, 1988; Peet, 1991; Rondinelli *et al.*, 1983). Black (1976, p.3) claimed that because of the success story of early developed countries, 'it is not surprising that they should regard their institutions as appropriate for other societies to follow'. Modernisation theorists believed that in order to develop, the process of changing from a traditional society to a modern Western-style society must be followed (Bernstein, 1971; Brohman, 1996). These perspectives have been criticised because they are not sensitive to the different social structures and cultures of developing societies by replacing the values of traditional society with those of modern society (Bauer, 1976; Bendix, 1959; Black, 1976). All societies have distinct social structures that might make them differ from one another (Bernstein, 1971). It may therefore not be appropriate to assume that all societies have a similar path and structure that can be copied and transplanted to others.

The concept of development: from traditional to modern society

The underdeveloped conditions of many LDCs after the post-war period are viewed as the failure of the traditional society to transform to modern society (Lewis, 1955; Rostow, 1960). In the study of modernisation theory, Parson's work has become a foundation for many modern political and sociological scholars (Smelser, 1964; Hoselitz, 1960; Lerner, 1958). He has influenced the study of modernisation theory which is primarily grounded in his description of the characteristics of traditional and modern societies. He has identified five important pattern variables: affective neutrality versus affectivity (the

gratification-discipline dilemma); specificity versus diffuseness (the system of role relationships more specific rather than diffuse system); universalism versus particularism (the universalism of modern system treated all members as the same and no bias towards others such as in particularism); achievement versus ascription (modern system focusing on achievement instead of favouring family ties or relatives); and self-orientation versus collective orientation (modern system encouraging to pursue private interests rather than obligate to common interests) (Parsons, 1966). Nonetheless, his characterisation of the general nature of societies and the change from traditional to modern societies have been criticised mainly because of an overemphasis on development based on the concept of modernity which is deeply rooted in Western values (Preston, 1996).

By associating Western values as the source for modernity and development, Parsons indicates that traditional society must emulate Western values, therefore, the underdevelopment of many LDCs can be resolved by implementing the development process of Western countries. More specifically, the historical experience of the modern societies suggested that poverty was reduced through economic growth such as in the expansion of the workforce, the enhancement of productivity especially in the farming sector, and the mobility of labour from farming to non-farming activities (Lea and Chaudhri, 1983). Not only that, the modern societies were also characterised by superiority in term of economics and technology (Hoogvelt, 1978). Thus, the significant achievements of high standards by modern societies such as the US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia through the industrialisation process led to an increase in social well-being, education and health, which made these groups of developed countries suitable examples for other LDCs (Black, 1976; Huntington and Nelson, 1976).

The need for the transition from traditional to modern society was considered important by the western scholars because they assumed that the traditional society were characterised as 'rural', 'backward' or 'underdeveloped' and the modern society were described as being 'urban', 'developed', 'industrial'

(Larrain, 1989, p.87). Traditional society was associated with ‘laziness, arrogance, spiritualism, violence, etc.’ (Peet, 1991, p.43), for that reason according to the modernisation theory the traditional values that contradict from those of Western societies should be changed because these values may become a barrier to the development process (Brohman, 1996). These traits are presumed to have hindered the development of the traditional society and held them back in poor conditions. Moreover, the negative attitudes of rural people have been associated with the standard of living particularly in the LDCs such as lack of initiatives and motivation (Brohman, 1996).

Instead of blaming the traditional societies for their poor living conditions, Sachs, W. (2007) claims that the poverty of people in LDCs are also due to inadequate donor resources to the targeted and most vulnerable groups. As a consequence billions of people live in extreme poverty without proper basic needs. Furthermore, Sachs, J. (2005) argues that inadequate commitment and less development assistance from what is perceived and promised, such as by US, are also part of the present development challenge especially for LDCs. Moreover, the argument by modernisation theorists that the traditional society needs to change and be a modern society is no longer applicable and influential (Sen, 1999). This is due to the existing evidence showing that the poverty and underdevelopment problems in LDCs more or less is not due to ‘being traditional’; rather, it is due to the poor policy formulation, lack of investment and institutional reforms such as in Southeast Asian countries to involve rural poor in development process, for instance in domestic markets, and attachment to the existing technology (Balisacan *et al.*, 2005). Furthermore, the strategy to modernise the traditional in order to develop is no longer the main strategy today. This is because the development of the LDCs is seen to be able to be harnessed through Global Value Chain (GVC) that emerges from the idea of globalisation which requires government agencies to work together with the people to benefit from the supply chains and wider markets as exemplified in Southeast Asia (*see further Renwick, 2011*).

The development of economic principles of modern societies

Modernisation theory has been explained from various perspectives such as the economic, social and political. However, in analysing economic growth, Lewis (1955), with his dualistic development model, and Rostow (1960), with his stages of growth model, were two of the leading scholars in modernisation theory. Lewis divided the LDCs economies into two: traditional and modern. The traditional sector characterised by traditional system of subsistence agriculture such as labour intensive production methods which did not generate investable profits. He believed that in a dualistic development approach, the traditional economies would benefit from the development of modern industrial sectors which are capital intensive and have high levels of modern technology. From these advanced technologies, modern economies are able to increase profit and reinvest the profits they generate. In the long term, this will increase productivity and enable them to hire more workers. Thus, modern industrial sectors are able to draw labour surplus from the traditional system of subsistence agriculture, and thereby generate long-run growth. However his understanding of development was viewed from historical experience of developed countries which was far less than to be believed in LDCs.

Rostow (1960), considering the transition from a traditional society to a modern society, noted that the development of a country needs to pass through a sequence of stages and he introduced the five stages of economic growth. First is the traditional society. It has been characterised as 'one whose structure is developed within limited production functions, based on pre-Newtonian science and technology and on pre-Newtonian attitudes towards the physical world' (p.1). This stage describes the traditional society which is limited by science and technology, which is an obstacle to development. Second is the pre-conditions for take-off. It explains the condition of the traditional society which opened up to modern science which begins to be used in the production of agriculture and industry. Third is the take-off stage which is the important one for economic growth.

The take-off is defined as the interval during which the rate of investment increases in such a way that real output *per capita* rises, and this initial increase carries with it radical changes in production techniques and the disposition of income flows, which perpetuate thereby the rising trend in *per capita* output (Rostow, 1956, p.275).

Fourth, the drive to maturity means increases in national income and profits which can be reinvested in new production capacity. Fifth, the stage of mass consumption, describes the period of shifting from heavy industry to the provision of consumer' goods and services. The stages of economic growth are not without criticism. Baran and Hobsbawm, (1961, p.14) remarked that the work of Rostow was similar to other economists that concerned on a mechanism of growth and 'little more than verbiage...based on...coffee-house sociology and political speculation'. The work of Rostow was contemporaneous with the need of the US in the 1960s in view of its competition over aid assistance with USSR and his strong criticism of Marxism (Preston, 1996; Rist, 2002).

Moreover, for modernisation theorists the development process in traditional economies can be speeded up through industrialisation where the productivity of the primary exports of the traditional society can be increased by making use of comparative advantage and the specialisation of the economic sector (Evans and Stephen, 1988; Peet, 1991) and by adopting modern technology which is transferred by the developed countries (O'Connell, 1976). They need to exploit their natural endowments by increasing productivity through modern technology and more effective land utilisation for large-scale agricultural business. In return, there is increased income, employment and productivity in the society (Brohman, 1996; Huntington, 1976). The LDCs were also encouraged to find and attract more foreign capital, to foster specialisation, export-led growth (Evans and Stephen, 1988) and promote and invest in highly intensive technology that can produce higher productivity and thus promote growth (Smelser, 1964). These achievements were witnessed in some of the poor countries during that period which enjoyed unprecedented economic growth with dramatic increases: apart from China, individual

incomes increased by around three quarters in the poorest countries in the two decades from 1950 (Lipton, 1988, p.29), and the introduction of comparative advantage attracted considerable FDI which enabled many small third-world countries to achieve economic growth (Brohman, 1996, p.37).

Nevertheless, the concept of development from growth maximisation has been opposed by other development economists who mostly work on LDCs such as Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. Seers' (1969) argument, for instance, is based on his work on development in LDCs. He asserts that even though a country such as India has achieved high economic growth, 'development' is still a far-fetched notion in a condition where there is increased poverty, high unemployment and wide inequality. For him, the period of development of a country can be endorsed when the three elements: poverty, unemployment and inequality have decreased. Moreover, Lipton (1988, p.32) pointed out that 'growth is not a good indicator of development, and that neither growth nor development brings welfare'. He argued that poor people in rural areas such as East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and Brazil hardly benefited from growth because there was a decrease in real rural income per head among the rural poor. He listed six shortcomings of post-war mainstream development theories assumed in LDCs. First, the European analogy mistaken the current situation of LDCs; second, the mainstream development policy did not take into consideration the poor organisation of labour in LDCs; third, business values as modelled by developed countries do not conform to the LDCs social contexts and cultures; fourth, the roles of the governments are limited as compared to the developed countries; fifth, large nation-states limit effective problem solving by LDCs as compared to effective management in developed countries; and sixth, a false analogy of the 'traditional' society and trickle-down effect worsens the LDCs. The development policies embarked on by policy makers in the post-war period, focused on growth and development, were therefore subject to intense criticism by many scholars (Bernstein, 1971; Brohman, 1996; Frank, 1969; Lea and Chaudhri, 1983; Lipton, 1988). The false analogy among development theorists about historical experience (Lea and Chaudhri, 1983) and the traditional-modern dichotomy (Bernstein, 1971) of the LDCs increased

tension among the rural poor because it had a negative impact on them (Lipton, 1988).

Meanwhile Myrdal (1971) argued that in developed countries, an examination of 'economic' concepts such as markets and prices; employment and unemployment, consumption and savings; investment and output are compatible with describing the standard of livings and the cultures of the developed societies; however, similar descriptions do not make sense in LDCs. We must, therefore, examine the real conditions of the LDCs and the real problems, which are attitudinal and institutional, as well as the impact of development towards low levels of living and culture. He claimed that the Western development approach in Southeast Asia was not well-matched and is therefore encountered several problems. Staatz and Eicher (1998) argued that even though there was unprecedented growth in many LDCs, mostly in South Asia, East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, 1.3 billion people still remained in poverty and most of them were in rural areas (Lipton, 1988). Brohman (1996) explained that the poverty among the rural poor can be considered as one of the effects from the primary export model (proposed by modernisation theorist) that utilised land for large-scale agriculture business and thus forced farmers off their land in traditional food-producing areas. The lack of land and resources then led to the problems of unemployment and underemployment among landless labourers (Lea and Chaudhri, 1983). These problems increased other social and economic problems in rural areas.

Overall, growth in LDCs was actually enjoyed by only a very small group of people, usually rich farmers and landlords (Simpson, 1994). In reality, growth did not benefit the bottom 40% of the population in the poor countries, most of whom lived in rural areas and were labourers or at best small farmers who had to supplement their income by working as labourers. Most of them continued to survive without tools, water or fertilisers (Lipton, 1988, p.15). In most cases growth benefited the local elites that possessed large-scale land and resources (discussed further Chapter 3).

Dependency Theory

The study of dependency theory can be divided into two main groups; North American Marxists or neo-Marxists and Latin Americans (Palma, 1978; Rist, 2002), but the latter are considered to be the ones who first developed this critical approach (Larrain, 1989). Dependency theory emerged from two main sources: a reflection of the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) on a centre-periphery relationship and its imbalances for development in Latin America, and the explanation of the integration of sociological and political elements of the process of economic development in LDCs. The emergence of dependency theory was a response to the shortcomings of growth and modernisation theory to explain the underdevelopment of Latin America and provide a convincing explanation for the development model (Peet, 1991). It criticised modernisation theory that ignored the external factors which constraint the development of LDCs that arose from the relationship between developed and LDCs. The emergence of the idea of dependency theory can also be explained as a consequence of criticisms of modernisation theory due to its assumption that the transition of LDCs can be modelled on Western-style historical experience and criticisms of the traditional-modern dichotomy. Dependency theorists contended that, the LDCs were poorly developed due to several factors such as the centre-periphery connection, internal barriers to state progress, and the activity of class struggle (Larrain, 1983; Palma, 1978).

Before moving on to discuss in detail the idea of dependency theory, it is necessary to examine development policy in the post-war period which was specifically related to the ECLA's policies.

The Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA)

Raul Prebisch, a director of ECLA, explained that the capitalist economy, in terms of comparative advantage and international exchange, led to the lack of progress of Latin America because of the existence of a centre-periphery relationship (Brohman, 1996; Larrain, 1989; Peet, 1991). He explained that the production of industrial goods produced at the centre was more profitable

because of higher demand and higher prices compared with the production of raw materials and cheap products, and that the centre may not necessarily import raw materials from the periphery. Prebisch identified that industrialised countries grow faster than LDCs and his research showed that 'the terms of trade of the centre countries had improved with industrialisation, from which he concluded that the terms of trade of the periphery must have deteriorated' (Peet, 1991, p.44; Prebisch, 1964). There were three main issues that have been identified by Prebisch that led to slow progress in Latin America: the problems of comparative advantage and primary exports; international exchange and import-substitution industrialisation (Prebisch, 1964).

Firstly, in Latin America, conventional economic theory was still prevalent, and it emphasised comparative advantage and international exchange (Brohman, 1996; Peet, 1991; Preston, 1996). To generate higher growth and development, the maximisation of comparative advantages such as the land, labour and capital which the countries possessed was considered imperative. Primary exports can be described as development strategies which emphasise the encouragement of growth through comparative advantage and by attracting more foreign capital into countries in order to develop the infrastructure and local projects (Huntington and Nelson, 1976; O'Connell, 1976; Simpson, 1994; Staatz and Eicher, 1998). As a consequence these processes will retain a stable and friendly environment for investment. Many LDCs therefore focused on increasing their primary exports to increase profits and income, which could then be used for investment within the countries and attract more foreign capital (Preston, 1996). This can be seen from the increase in the agricultural exports of many LDCs such as coffee, tea, bananas, sugar and cotton. Thus comparative advantage and primary exports enabled Latin American countries to maximise their economic strong points (Brohman, 1996; Preston, 1996). However, the increase in foreign capital, investment and primary agricultural exports in LDCs were also shown to create a decrease in staple food for local consumption, because the production of agricultural food was focused only on exports (Brohman, 1996; Griffin and Ghose, 1979; Lea and

Chaudhri, 1983; Dixon, 1990); the land was utilised and maximised for large-scale agribusiness, and this led to creating a landless rural poor who relied on land for traditional food production (Lipton, 1988; Staatz and Eicher, 1998), and it increased rural-urban migration due to the promise of employment in the industrial sector (Lea and Chaudhri, 1983).

Secondly, an international exchange of conventional economic theory emphasised that the exchange of industrial goods and primary goods between developed and LDCs produced advantages (Larrain, 1989; Peet, 1991). These included first, the technical progress in industrial countries will be a benefit for all countries because the price of the industrial products might reduce, and for the long term the non-industrial countries can progress without being industrialised (Adelman and Morris, 1997); second, the non-industrial countries will enjoy the benefits of increases in the price of raw materials with the increase in demand from industrialised countries. However, the shortcomings of conventional economics affected the economies of Latin America due to the decrease in trade, the prolonged economic progress, the decrease in the ratio of revenues and the downturn and industrial crises (Brohman, 1996; Frank, 1969; Larrain, 1989). So instead of relying on importing industrial goods and focusing more on primary exports, Prebisch's strategy was to strengthen the industrialised sector of the LDCs in order to reduce the widening gap between them and developed countries (Brohman, 1996; Rapley, 2007; Rondinelli *et al.*, 1983). It was also beyond the capability of the primary exports to generate profits rapidly compared with the industrial sector. There were therefore possibilities for achieving growth more rapidly and in a more self-sustaining way through import-substitution industrialisation (ISI) in the model of development of inward-oriented growth. ISI was necessary to reduce their dependence on the demand for raw materials from other countries and to endeavour to increase the internal demand (Larrain, 1989, p.104).

Thirdly, the problem that led to the slow progress of Latin America was due to the implementation strategies of import-substitution industrialisation (ISI) (Prebisch, 1964). First, protection tariffs are needed in order to protect local

industrial products. This is important because the productivity of developed countries is much higher than that of LDCs and this might therefore threaten the local industrial products. Protection tariffs are required as long as productivity remains lower than that of developed countries (Brohman, 1996). However, this strategy was heavily criticised because the tariffs limited competition, created an inefficient allocation of resources and led to low quality products and a decrease in productivity (Leys, 1996; Rapley, 2007). Second, state intervention is required in order to plan and manage all the industrialised activity. State intervention was seen as an important requirement for the LDCs in import substitution (Brohman, 1996). Even so, the heavy state intervention in industrialised activity was criticised because it led to persistent bribery among politicians and bureaucratic elites (Rondinelli *et al.*, 1983) and inefficient administration due to the lack of skills among administrators (Rapley, 2007). It was argued that state-led intervention in the market undermines the capability of market-led growth (Leys, 1996). Third, foreign capital is considered important for achieving higher growth by bringing in machinery and technology from developed countries which are not produced within the LDCs. The inflow of foreign capital into countries will increase investment and savings and also provide job opportunities through the establishment of Transnational Corporations (TNCs). Nevertheless, this policy was over-reliant on foreign capital and was criticised because it was actually considered to be 'high import intensive' and to lead to fiscal problems (Brohman, 1996). ISI was also condemned because of its focus on highly capital-intensive industries such as automobiles, household appliances and petrochemicals. These industries required the countries to borrow from developed countries and then, when recession happened, the LDCs would be affected most and this would consequently lead to an increase in debt and foreign borrowing. Fourth, the implementation of regional economic integration is also needed in order to widen the market for exports and trade and to sell products to other countries because of the small market within the state. In doing so the LDCs needed to work as regional grouping, so a proper global framework which included the practical and economic funding for

commerce would be needed (Prebisch, 1964), but it was quite difficult in practice.

The issues discussed above showed several reasons for the slow progress of Latin America. The failure of the capitalist economy to improve the conditions of Latin America has been heavily criticised, so, a more reliable and practical development theory was required: dependency theory.

The development of underdevelopment

The approaches of dependency theory mostly in Latin America can be grouped into three (Larrain, 1989; Palma, 1978). First, the study of underdevelopment that was caused by capitalism; second, the study of obstacles to national development that were caused by the external conditions; and third, the study of 'concrete situations of dependency' and the emphasis on the internal processes of class struggle that influenced the situation of the Latin American countries. For the first group, dependency scholars such as Baran and Hobsbawm (1961), Frank (1969), Wallerstein (1976) and Amin (1974) focused on describing the dependence on capitalist economies which had led to the underdevelopment of the periphery, and unequal exchange between centre and periphery in the world economic system does not favour the periphery. For the second and third groups, Larrain (1989, p.114; Palma, 1978) classified these as groups of dependency scholars who studied 'social formations and national boundaries' in 'internal relations of production and class conflicts'. Even though the focus of the second group was important, the ideas of the first group of dependency scholars were still regarded by Browett (1985, p.790) as important because they focused on 'an explicit alternative both to modernisation theory of the diffusionist paradigm and to the classic Marxist theories of imperialism' even though many had criticised them (Brenner, 1977; Laclau, 1973; Palma, 1978).

Baran is considered one of the most important scholars in dependency theory. He argued that the underdevelopment of LDCs or peripheries was a

consequence of developed countries drawing economic surpluses to the centre and underdeveloped countries failing to develop capitalism in the generally accepted way (Peet, 1991, p.45). His work was marginal in the late 1960s, but it was popularised by Frank (1969, p.9) who believed that capitalism was to be blame for the underdevelopment of the periphery (satellite or LDCs):

Underdevelopment is not due to the survival of archaic institutions and the existence of capital shortage in regions that have remained isolated from the stream of world history. On the contrary, underdevelopment was and still is generated by the very same historical process which also generated economic development: the development of capitalism itself.

Frank (1969) claimed that the underdevelopment of the periphery was due to the exploitation and domination of the centre (metropolis or developed countries) through trade in world capitalist economies for their economic growth. He argued that in the international market, the centre exploits the economic surplus of the periphery (LDC), thus leading to the growth of the former and the underdevelopment of the latter. Frank (1969, p.146) argued that the world is complex and encompasses

a whole chain of metropolises [developed] and satellites [LDCs], which runs from the word metropolis down to the hacienda or rural merchant who are satellites of the local commercial metropolitan centre but who in their turn have peasants as their satellites

Therefore, Frank (1967, p.11) outlined several aspects that underlie the 'model of underdevelopment': Latin America and other peripheral states in the world economy had started since their colonial periods; the involvement of the periphery in the world economy had transformed the periphery into a capitalist economy; and the capitalist economy that was incorporated by the periphery lasted a long period of time, which can be explained as the centre-periphery relationship, and all the surplus from the periphery will be extracted to the centre. Frank (1969) believed that the underdevelopment of the LDCs or peripheries was due to capitalism that had long existed because of the involvement of the peripheries in the international market. For Frank,

independence from capitalism would be the only solution for the development of underdeveloped countries (Frank, 1969; Larrain, 1989; Peet, 1991) (see further Amin (1976) and Wallerstein (1974)).

However after several years dependency theory was no longer applicable and is hardly mentioned today. This was due to its persistent view that development is not possible in a context of capitalism (Sanchez, 2003, p.39) and it was further impractical with the rise of the Four Asian Tigers namely South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong in the late twentieth century. Hence, alternative development was proposed.

The reconstruction of development

The mainstream development approaches, from modernisation to dependency, which define development as growth and capital accumulation have been changing since the 1970s and have been replaced with more people-centred approaches, economic liberalism and also the consideration of globalisation as the new ideas that transform the world order (Sen, 1999). The following sections discuss the mainstream development approaches which are deficient in the development process and are contested by the alternative development and the post-development approaches.

Alternative development

From the early 1980s alternative development emerged as a roving critique of mainstream approaches which focuses on local development and people-centred development to effect social change (Pieterse, 2010). The alternative development model was popularised by the Swedish Dag Hammarskojkd Foundation in 1975, which published the report 'What Now?' (Friedmann, 1992). This report challenged the failure of mainstream development approaches to reduce mass poverty, specifically through economic growth and adjustment of international politics and economic structures, but stated that these strategies had not taken into consideration 'development from below'.

Development from below emphasised the involvement of community and NGOs in the development process by defining needs of poor people, marginalised groups such as women and minority ethnic and vulnerable groups, based on their own social and cultural values in LDCs (see further Carmen (1996), Korten (1990), Max-Neef *et al.* (1991) and Nerfin (1977)). These were responses to the ineffective trickle-down development policies and top-down development approaches of mainstream approaches. This has led to the claim that the development proposed by the developed countries is a form of neo-colonialism (Brown, 2005). Moreover, in Latin America, the idea of people as conscious agents which was proposed by Freire (1970) in his work on critical education has motivated particularly the poor and the NGOs. This has prompted those in the LDCs to search for a new method for development.

Nerfin (1977, p.10 cited in Hettne, 1995) proposed that development approaches should also focus on the following criteria: they should be 'need oriented; endogenous; self-reliant; ecologically sound and based on structural transformation'. For example, self-reliance was proposed as a local development strategy in order to improve the poorer conditions of the poor in LDCs. It has been embedded in regional and rural development (Herbert-Cheshire and Higgins, 2004). These development criteria however have been criticised as being difficult to fulfil. Rist (2002) claimed that it was not so easy to define the 'needs' of poor people in order to provide aid. Each country has its own culture, requirements and aspirations and might therefore define needs differently. For instance, education and literacy may be among the most important aspects for the rural poor, but in some traditional societies it might be assumed that income generation was more important than education. Thus, the alternative development approach claimed that each society has its own unique characteristics and needs, and this approach was not intended to offer a universal path to development (Friedmann, 1992, p.vi; Hettne, 1995). However, this approach has been steadily attacked in the execution of the participation programme because it only permits minimum local participation particularly in rural development activities (Ahmad *et al.*, 2017; Brohman, 1996). For the proponents of neo-liberalism, bottom-up development and

state intervention in the market would lead to the erosion of efficiency and slower economic growth than would be the case if there were no interference in the market (Willis, 2004, p.47), so the market-led approach was seen as the superior one. So, by 1980 the decision on policy making in many LDCs was dominated by the international governmental organisations (IGOs) such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) which were known as the opponent of state intervention and the proponent of market ideology (Stewart *et al.*, 2018a, p.231) (Chapter 3).

Post-development

Post-development can be differentiated from other approaches such as 'alternative development' and 'human development' because it totally rejected the development concept (Pieterse, 2000, p.176). The idea of post-development emerged after the failures of mainstream development worsened the conditions of the LDCs. The proponents of post-development contend that the mainstream development had produced more harm than good (*see further* Escobar (1995), Kothari (1990), Latouche (1993), Rahnema (1992) and Sachs (1992)). It had destroyed social, cultural, political and economic systems especially for people in LDCs by replacing it with mainstream development thinking (McGregor, 2007). The proponents of post-development therefore foresaw the end of development and sought 'alternatives to development' rather than 'alternative development' (Matthews, 2004, p.373).

Escobar and other main proponents of post-development shared similar ideas about local culture and knowledge, scepticism about accepted science and the need to protect and encourage local involvement (Escobar, 1995, p.215). Grassroots movements emerged in the 1980s and in Timor Leste, for example, local NGOs worked strategically in a development framework by selecting the members to work with, selecting the programmes that they would undertake and planning ahead for their future (McGregor, 2007, p.168). More importantly, the process was 'flexible, community-focused, supportive of alternative socio-political spaces'. This was in line with Escobar's (1995,

p.216) claim, that the new social movements were significantly important in creating new identities in LDCs by being more 'flexible, modest, and mobile, relying on tactical articulations arising out of the conditions and practices of daily life'.

Post-development theorists place the role for the process of societal transformation in local movements, such as 'new social movements, community representatives' (McGregor, 2007, p.157) and other grassroots organisations, to bring about change and transformation at the societal level (Matthews, 2004, p.376). The new social movements were believed to understand better the local conditions and the needs of the local communities. The power to decide the transformation that benefited the communities resides within the communities themselves. This differed from mainstream development where it was the experts who 'know everything' about development, especially at the community level.

Even so, post-development has been criticised for ignoring current development thinking which emphasises participation, empowerment and bottom-up decision making, and assuming that the LDCs communities are passive; so there is no clear practical application of the post-development approach (McGregor, 2007, p.157). The lack of a practical approach was criticised by Nustad (2001, p.479), who wrote that 'the lack of instrumentality is not a weighty argument against the analysis itself, however'. More specific in the critique of post-development, Ziai (2004, pp.1050-53) for example, stated that the

uncritical stance towards local communities and cultural tradition; complete rejection of modernity and development; cultural difference as potential instrument of oppression, rejection of universalism; another blueprint for a better society and critique but no construction

The new development paradigm

The old model is broken. We need to create a new one...In this time of global challenge, even crisis, business as usual will not do...It is time to recognise that human capital and natural capital are every bit important as financial capital. It is time to invest in people...Clearly we must unite around a shared vision for the future - a vision for equitable human development, a healthy planet, an enduring economic dynamism (Ahmad *et al.*, 2017, p.577; Ban Ki-Moon, 2012).

In the 1980s, there was a common belief that social research and theorising about development had reached an impasse. Modernisation theory, dependency theory, alternative development and post-development were seen as unable to explain the complex diversity and underdevelopment of LDCs. The theories failed to provide an explanation of the real world of development within a mixture of multi-faceted conditions and left no alternatives to the policy makers and other dominant actors who were involved in development in LDCs (Booth, 1994, pp.3-5). Schuurman (2014) further explained that the impasse in development studies was due to inability of the 'if...then' concept of mainstream development to explain experiences of development and underdevelopment in LDCs. Edwards (1989, p.118) claimed that the mainstream development approaches to development studies had treated people 'as objects to be studied rather than as subjects of their own development'. This was because the researcher (development experts) and the researched (people) in the development process were not engaged. He argued that development experts needed to 'learn from below' and make use of participatory research and encourage participation among local people in managing their own development. Stiglitz (1998, p.4) claimed that the former mainstream development had failed because of its narrow focus on 'price stability, growth and the stability of output'. He therefore suggested that a new development paradigm should focus much more on a development strategy which anticipates 'the process of development strategy, the process of participation, the means by which the ownership and consensus is to be obtained, and how the details will be fleshed out'. He believed that society, particularly in LDCs, can be transformed to become a better society when the

development strategies focus on a comprehensive and clear vision of the transformation of the society, accelerate society-wide change, and understand development and participation from within the society.

Because of the condemnation of mainstream development and the dilemma in theories of development, the new development patterns in the late twentieth and twenty-first century started to be focused with growth with equity, human development, sustainable development, women empowerment, democratic rights and civil liberties (Gasper and Gomez, 2015; Sen, 1999, p.xi). Moreover, the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries saw the rise of various social movements concerned with gender issues, environmental issues and human development and these became prominent in development studies (Haq, 1995; Redclift, 1992; Sachs, 1992). In fact, the arguments of feminists on the role of women in development can be traced back to the 1970s (Boserup, 1970). They claimed that the participation of women in development was minimal due to their traditional work as child-rearers and housewives. The imbalance of gender development triggered gender awareness and thus several approaches to addressing the specific needs of women in development grew up, such as Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD) and Gender and Development (GAD) (Brown, 2005; Moser, 1992; Willis, 2004).

In parallel with the feminists, environmentalists, ecologists and geographers were concerned about environmental issues. The issue of sustainable development had been raised by the *Limits to Growth* report which argued that 'population and industrial growth will certainly stop within the next century, at the latest' (see further Meadows *et al.*, 1972, p.126). These assumptions were made on the basis of the present system and if there was no control of consumption and production in developed countries and LDCs, this might worsen the global environment. The support towards sustainable development was complemented further after the Brundtland Commission published its report known as *Our Common Future* which defined sustainable development as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'

(WCED, 1987, p.43). It focused on the possibility of growth to alleviate poverty that was deepening in most LDCs based on policies that support and enlarge the environmental resource base (UNDP, 1987). However the Brundtland report was claimed to be in favour of pro-economic growth (Melkote and Steeves, 2001) and to sustain the concept of 'acceptable' growth (Turner, 1988, p.12). In addition, the report led to the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro (1992) which focused on tackling environmental issues, particularly explaining the relationship between economic, social and environmental dimensions and sustainable development. This was largely due to the severe impacts on the environment caused by unlimited human activities and resource depletion (Sachs, 1992). Sachs (1992) argued that the idea of efficient management of the environment, the importance of economic growth to pay for environmental recovery and the advances in technology for reducing the environmental effect were the same as the 'trickle-down' policies which had failed to help the poor. However, these policies are still prevalent today.

At the same time, as well as the gender and environmental issues, the most striking shift in the new development paradigm came after the publication of *Adjustment With a Human Face* by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which was regarded to mean structural adjustment with a human face has been described as imperative for human development (such as reducing poverty) (Hulme and Turner, 1990). UNICEF has led assistance in finding alternatives to stabilise the economies of LDCs to reduce the impacts of structural adjustment introduced by the IGOs (Cornia *et al.*, 1988 as cited in Hulme and Turner, 1990, p.148), that was part of neo-liberal economic policies to assist the development in the LDCs (*see further* Cornia and Stewart, 2014; Colclough, 2014; Harvey, 2005, 2007) (detail in Chapter 3). These events provided a discursive shift especially in the UN summits, and particularly in Rio in 1992 (as discussed above) and Copenhagen in 1995, where it provided much voice and legitimacy for the social movements (such as the environmentalists) and focused on social as opposed to merely on economic development (Cornwall and Brock, 2005). Likewise, the UNDP introduced the

Human Development Report (HDR) in 1990, and shifted the ‘focus of development economics from national income accounting to people centred policies’ (Haq, 1995 as cited in Fukuda-Parr 2003, p.302) and it has contributed to the introduction of the concept of human development (HD).

Human development (HD) was not intended to represent a break from economic growth, rather it ‘was the outcome of a process of evolution in ideas, policies and outcomes’ (Stewart, 2019, p.136). So the contemporary development paradigms are a combination of economic growth and HD. Both paradigms are seen as complementing each other and obviously have a two-way relationship (Ranis and Stewart, 2005; Ranis *et al.*, 2000; Suri *et al.*, 2011). On the one hand, economic growth provides a means for people to achieve well-being and maintain improvements in HD, and on the other hand, HD improvements enable people to contribute more to the economic growth of the country. The focus on economic growth was one of the strategies introduced under the neo-liberal policies and it was believed that the ‘changes in the structures, institutions, norms and governing the political economy of development processes’ (Kashwan *et al.*, 2019, p.133) could contribute to economic growth and thus enhance people’s well-being and bring improvement in HD. The neo-liberal policies have been constantly criticised for focusing on a market-oriented approach which favours free markets, liberalisation, privatisation, private property rights and free trade as mechanisms to achieve development, which in fact have contributed to the increase in economic and social inequalities (Chimhowu *et al.*, 2019, p.77). Even so, the notion has persisted longer than other paradigms (Harvey, 2005; Konczal, 2018; Peck and Theodore, 2019), for example from the Washington consensus (Williamson, 1990) to the post-Washington consensus (Birdsall and Fukuyama, 2011), and after the financial crisis of 2008, the neo-liberal policies shifted to ‘deep marketisation’ (Carroll and Jarvis, 2015, p.283). So the economic growth brought about by neo-liberal policies involved a series of political, economic and social structures which prioritized market relations, enhanced role of the state and encouraged responsibility at the individual level (Kashwan *et al.*, 2019, p.134).

The HD approach actually emerged as a consequence of the theoretical and empirical problems of economic growth (Stewart, 2019). Instead of focusing on economic growth as the primary objective of development, HD focused on expanding people's choices, such as in social, economic and political areas (Fukuda-Parr, 2003, p.311), and on 'capabilities, environmental sustainability, and subjective well-being' (Stewart *et al.*, 2018c, p.22). HD allows human functionings and capabilities through 'human capabilities, equality of outcomes, fairness and justice in institutional arrangements' (Fukuda-Parr, 2003, p.311). The concept of HD was perceived as a comprehensive method because it 'covers all aspects of development - whether economic growth or international trade, budget deficits or fiscal policy' (Haq, 1995, p.19) and 'monetary income and GNP per Capita are inadequate' (Stewart *et al.*, 2018c, p.21) to assess human well-being. So, HD and well-being which were conceptualised as expanding capabilities have focused on finding new initiatives to achieve socio-economic development and strengthen public policy rather than prioritizing economic growth and social well-being (Frediani *et al.*, 2014, p.1). Nevertheless, HD has been criticised because it followed the principles of neo-liberalism which was letting the market set prices and wages and reducing state intervention in mainstream development (Brohman, 1996; Pieterse, 2010). Even though HD was still considered relevant because a higher recognition was needed of human liberty and nobility with a people-oriented focus (Fukuda-Parr, 2003) which was different from the neo-liberal aim of the Washington Consensus (Jolly, 2003, p.302). Alkire (2010, p.48) further emphasised that

in the earlier framework [economic growth], the healthy economy was one that was growing in terms of income per capita. In the human development framework, a healthy economy is one that is growing in terms of people's freedoms and capabilities

In short, both economic growth and human development approaches came to a political compromise and were put together in global goals, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Chapter 3) as the prime objective of the contemporary approach to

development. The international governmental UN organisation, through its new institutional arrangement, introduced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that adopt both economic growth and non-economic aspects (Ahmad *et al.*, 2017; Wiman, 2006, p.21). With the expiry of MDGs in 2015, the focus is now on ‘multidimensional human objectives and on deprivation, while they include ‘inclusive’ growth as one of the principles’ (Stewart *et al.*, 2018c, p.22) through a new concept known as a Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, both MDGs and SDGs have been criticised because they were designed ‘to promote and consolidate a highly contested neo-liberal variant of capitalist development’ (Weber, 2017, p.399) and also fulfilling the interests of capitalist such as in agricultural sector (Spann, 2017). Likewise, Fukuda-Parr and McNeill (2019, p.14) have clearly shown that

The real locus of power in setting international agendas has shifted to the selection of indicators. The exercise of power takes place through multiple steps in the process of setting the goals and measuring them; and it is, for the most part, obscured in what are purportedly strictly technical processes with technocrats in charge

Although they provide ‘mixed picture...uneven trends in some areas, and notable worsening on the environmental dimension’ (Stewart, 2019, p.135), SDGs have become a blueprint and a source of freedom for the United Nations over the next 15 years in several critical areas such as ‘people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership’ (United Nations, 2016).

Conclusion

The first section of this chapter critically reviewed mainstream development approaches, particularly modernisation theory and dependency theory. It has been argued that the mainstream development theories and development strategies and policies failed to explain the rise of poverty and the underdevelopment of LDCs after the Second World War. Modernisation theory narrowed the focus of human well-being to economic growth. It is believed that in order to develop, traditional society needs to transform to become modern society and that this can be exemplified through Western historical

experiences. Following that transition, there would be economic growth and the achievement of modern society. This argument has, however, been contested by the dependency theory which argued that modernisation theory ignored the external factors which constrain the development of LDCs, and the assumption that the transition of LDCs can be modelled on the Western-style development. Dependency theory emphasised capital accumulation, investment and the centre-peripheral relationship which enable the development of LDCs. This theory blamed the developed countries for the underdevelopment of LDCs. So 'de-linking' from the developed countries' strategy has been considered reasonable to avoid the loss of economic surplus to the developed countries. The blame for the underdevelopment of LDCs in the 1980s, however, has been attributed to dependency theory for its failure to explain the complexity and diversity in underdeveloped countries. Even so, the supremacy of economic growth as a strategy for development was still prevalent in the 1980s.

The second section of this chapter argued that the ineffective neo-liberal strategy of economic growth trickling-down to the mass of the people, the 'de-linking' strategy and the over-reliance on the state were contested by the alternative development approach and the post-development. On the one hand, supporters of the alternative development approach have argued that development should be centred on people and focused on local development. It emphasised development from below which can lead to the burgeoning of grassroots movements at the local level. This approach has nevertheless been criticised, particularly in its area of participation, because it only allows minimal local participation. On the other hand, post-development supporters have claimed that mainstream development had produced more harm than good. The post-development theorists contended that there was a need for an 'alternative to development'. They placed the role for the process of societal transformation in local movements. This perspective has also been criticised because it lacked a practical approach to development.

Following that, the third section discussed the new development paradigm which has gained momentum in the twenty-first century. It focuses on areas such as sustainable development, gender equality, democracy, human rights and freedoms and HD. In this section, human development was critically discussed to illuminate the new development paradigm in the twenty-first century and to compare it with the mainstream development theories. In short, this section has explained the political compromise between the principles of economic growth (neo-liberal) and HD in understanding the contemporary theories of development at the national and the international levels. The political compromise between these perspectives has been manifested through MDGs and SDGs.

The following chapter will explain the evolving discourse on rural development within theories of development and its relationship to those theories.

Chapter 3

Rural Development

Introduction

This chapter provides a critical analysis of the evolving idea of rural development in order to further understanding of public participation at the local level in an LDC context. The following discussion examines the specific issue of rural development within post-World War II theories of development to examines the terms 'poverty' and 'rural development'. The next section examines a consideration of rural development strategies during different development contexts: the mainstream development approach, the structural adjustment period and the people-centred development approach. A discussion then follows of rural development trends in the twenty-first century, which focus on poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

An overview of rural poverty

After the Second World War, rural areas were associated with poverty and were seen as backward and dominated by traditional agriculture (Binswanger, 1994). Their condition can be categorised as underdeveloped, with costly fare charge, many impoverished people, conservative farming techniques and lack of facilities (Ashley and Maxwell, 2001, p.397). The most striking picture of rural areas can be identified from the fact that the majority of the poorest people in the world lived in them. These poor people consisted of 'individuals, households and groups' who lived in remote rural areas and had tendency of chronic poverty (Bird *et al.*, 2002, p.4). They were easily identified as those people who were socially marginalised, exposed to poverty and unable to achieve even a subsistence level of survival (Beck and Nesmith, 2000, p.119).

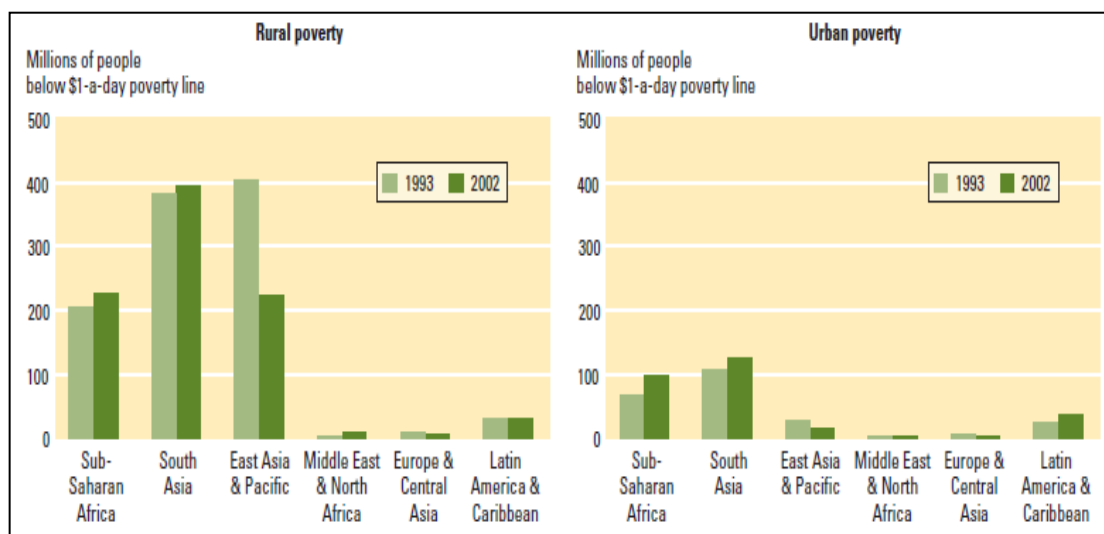
For most Southeast Asian countries, the agricultural sector is still the major rural economic activity and the only source of income and employment for rural people (ASEAN, 2012). Furthermore, Binswanger (1994, p.287) claimed that the ‘backwardness of traditional smallholder agriculture’ had no potential to be developed. Therefore, to reduce rural poverty, the development policies and strategies focused on ‘urban-growth and rural-to-urban migration’. Despite several policies and strategies invented for poverty reduction in rural areas, the rural poverty continued to be still pervasive and hotly debated (Harris, 2007; Matin and Hulme 2003; Olinto *et al.*, 2013).

In fact, Shah (2011) found that the majority of poor people lived in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia and Pacific and Southeast Asia, where over 75% of the extremely poor lived in rural areas and had no alternative but to attempt so earn their livelihood by working on the land (Olinto *et al.*, 2013, p.1). In these areas poor people were living on less than \$1.25 per day (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA, 2009). Of the people in this category, 75% lived in rural areas, and the majority of those generated what income they had through agricultural activities (Dethier and Effenberger, 2012). Alkire *et al.* (2014) has used the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) to identify rural-urban poverty from 105 countries and they identified that 85% poor people live in rural areas as depicted in Table 3.1 below. The MPI is slightly different from the HDI (Chapter 2) where more than one indicator is used to measure human development (*see Alkire et al.*, 2014). Figure 3.1 further illustrates the clear gap between rural and urban areas based on the number of poor in different regions.

Table 3.1: Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) by Region, 2008-2013

	Number of Countries	Total Population (thousands)	Number of MPI Poor (thousands)	Number of Rural Poor (thousands)	Number of Urban Poor (thousands)	MPI poor living in rural areas 'Rural Share' (%)
All countries	105	4,001,345	1,433,456	1,214,322	219,134	84.7%
East Asia & Pacific (excluding China)	9	514,360	64,663	48,863	17,800	72.5%
Europe & Central Asia	17	233,731	8,820	5,543	3,277	62.8%
Latin America & Caribbean	15	469,739	28,697	19,953	8,744	69.5%
Middle East & North Africa	9	206,909	25,345	19,074	6,271	75.3%
South Asia	8	1,606,945	833,946	719,496	114,450	86.3%
Sub-Saharan Africa	38	789,187	469,342	402,637	66,705	85.8%
High Income Countries	9	180,474	180,474	756	1,887	28.6%

Source: Alkire *et al.*, 2014, p.2



Source: Ravallion *et al.*, 2007 as cited in World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for development, p.3

Figure 3.1: The Number of Poor from 1993 to 2002

Table 3.2: Poverty in Southeast Asia

Country	Poverty incidence (%) using national poverty line				
	Total	Urban	Rural	Contribution of rural poverty to total poverty	
Cambodia	(1999)	35.9	18.2	40.1	93.8
Indonesia	(2002)	18.2	14.5	21.1	70.3
Lao PDR	(1997)	38.6	26.9	41.0	80.7
Malaysia	(1999)	7.5	3.4	12.4	69.3
Myanmar	(1997)	22.9	23.9	22.4	70.4
Philippines	(2000)	34.0	20.4	47.4	72.4
Thailand	(2002)	9.8	4.0	12.6	91.3
Vietnam	(2002)	28.9	6.6	35.6	92.3

Source: Balisacan, 2005, p.27

Table 3.2 shows the poverty incidence among Southeast Asia countries. ASEAN (2012) reported that in Southeast Asia nearly 70% of the poor live in rural areas and there was a huge gap between urban and rural poor. Dixon (1990) systematically identified several features of the rural poor as shown in Table 3.3. Most rural people were involved in agricultural activities as their only source of income.

Table 3.3: Characteristics of The Rural Poor

1	Landless	8	Low life expectancy
2	Too little land	9	Low income
3	Family too large	10	Irregular income
4	Malnutrition	11	Weak bargaining position
5	Ill-health	12	Isolated, owing to poor communications
6	Uneducated	13	Preoccupied with survival
7	High infant mortality	14	Indebtedness

Source: Dixon, 1990, p.51

The historical context of rural development

Rural development had been identified as shifting away from depending on agriculture to centre on industrialised activities (Johnston, 1970). Nevertheless, the focus on the multiplicity of the economy by stressing industrialisation was not fortunate (see Chapter 2) due to the mistreated of

social welfare structures. Not until the 1980s did the concept of rural development gain momentum among international development agencies such as the WB.

Defining rural development is not clear-cut. Ploeg *et al.* (2008) say that there has been no comprehensive definition of rural development, despite much empirical research into it. Thus, some scholars have associated rural development with the economic growth or development of rural regions (Ploeg *et al.*, 2008), because the term 'rural' has always been compared with 'urban' - this indicates the division between the two. Sometimes, the term has been defined based on low population density, areas dominated by the agricultural sector, large distances between communities, and few buildings sparsely distributed (Ashley and Maxwell, 2001). Wiggin and Proctor (2001) described rural areas as having three elements: plenty of land, remote areas surrounded by rivers and mountains, and a high proportion of poor people. Despite this ambiguity, and there being no agreed academic definition of rural development, the WB has defined it as

A strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people, the rural poor. It involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural area (World Bank, 1975, p.3)

Over the post-war period rural poverty and the lack of development in rural areas which were heavily focused on traditional agriculture were blamed on low agricultural productivity. Several rural development strategies were therefore developed with the main focus of increasing agricultural productivity (Staatz and Eicher, 1998). Rural development strategies after the post-war period can be understood from various perspectives. Each of the rural development perspectives reflected particular stages in the evolution of rural development such as community development, small-farm growth, state-led markets, process, participation, empowerment and actor approaches, sustainable livelihoods and poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) (Bird *et*

al., 2002; Ellis and Biggs, 2001). These evolutions of rural development will be discussed next.

Rural development strategies under the mainstream development approach

The rural development policies pursued after World War II inherited the dual-economy sector's theory and modernisation theory (Chapter 2). Development economists believed that rural poverty was created by the traditional way of life of rural people and their economic activities which depended on very limited traditional approaches which generated very limited incomes. As such, the rural development policies and strategies must reflect the causes of the rural poverty. More specifically, three common rural development strategies can be identified: technocratic, reformist and radical (Dixon, 1990; Griffin and Ghose, 1979; Hinderink and Titus, 1988; Lea and Chaudhri, 1983) during the mainstream development period.

First, the technocratic strategy refers to an increase in the productivity of agriculture. This can be done in two ways: amalgamate mainstream inputs, for example land, such as in Brazil; and the utilisation of advanced technology, such as in Philippines in the production of rice. This strategy benefited the small group of landowning elites who possessed large farms, *latifundia* and plantations. Simply put, the main aim of technocratic strategy was to increase the agricultural productions and the benefits of the huge agricultural productions 'trickled-down' to the rural poor. This strategy was heavily influenced by the economic growth strategy of modernisation in the 1950s and 1960s. Under the technocratic strategy, most LDCs focus on increasing productivity and output (Dixon, 1990). Thus the term 'green revolution' (GR) has emerged among LDCs. The GR strategy was introduced to increase the productivity of small farmers. It is believed that the small-farm sector that exists in the poorest parts of the world needs to be developed in order to reduce poverty, and so rural development policies need to be driven to improve the small-farm sector through technology and access to markets (Mellor, 1966). For instance, the application of High Yield Varieties (HYV)

cultivation technology has been introduced in developing countries under the GR strategy to increase yields of crops such as wheat and rice (Hayami and Ruttan, 1971). The application of HYV has indeed resulted in increased production of wheat and rice in developing countries in several Asian countries such as India, the Philippines and Malaysia (Griffin and Ghose, 1979; Dixon, 1991). In India, the use of fertiliser and credit subsidies were claimed as a successful approach during Indian green revolutions (Kydd and Dorward, 2004). Even so, the application of HYV has not been without problems, because poor farmers are often unable to raise productivity due to limited resources, especially for the landless. HYV has brought much benefit to those people who possess land and capital and can adopt the newly-developed seed (Bardhan, 1973). Poor farmers, however, have also been constrained by other non-farm factors, such as access to good health, education and the rural infrastructure. In light of the failure of local development and of GR strategies for rural development, the reformist strategy was introduced.

Second, the reformist strategy placed the emphasis on income and wealth redistribution among middle-level peasantry and urban residents, because agricultural improvements concentrated on progressive farmers (Lea and Chaudhri, 1983). It focused on the redistribution of income, especially among middle-level peasantry, and differed from the technocratic strategy. This strategy has led to income inequality between the rich (elites) and the poor (landless) because the distribution of income was concentrated only among 'progressive' farmers such as the retired army workforce, civil servants and politicians, and certain ethnic groups such as the Malay people in Malaysia (Lea and Chaudhri, 1983). These reforms, as Griffin and Ghose (1979) pointed out, were biased, and contributed to a dualistic agricultural sector, such as in Mexico where the land redistribution policy was concentrated in the South, while in the North, capital-intensive farming was pursued in irrigated areas.

Third, in sharp contrast to the technocratic and reformist strategies, the radical strategy aimed for the redistribution of power and rapid social change. It tended to favour low-level peasants and landless labourers by abolishing

private property and then placing land in the hands of collectives, communes or state farms. This has been practiced in China and Vietnam, where the focus has been primarily on the locality - that is, the solutions to problems should come from within (local level) and not from external influences such as the national level.

Even though different rural development strategies have been implemented by governments and international donors, poverty is still prevalent among the rural poor (Lea and Chaudhri, 1983), and there has been a failure to generate income and employment for poor farmers and the landless, with the majority of them involved in the agricultural sector (Ashley and Maxwell, 2001, Torre and Wallet, 2015; Griffin and Ghose, 1979). In the 1960s and 1970s, instead of focusing on the productivity or output of the agricultural sector, Integrated Rural Development (IRD) was introduced to incorporate the rural poor in the decision making process and it covered various aspects: not only agricultural matters, but also human resource development, education, health and social infrastructure (Rondinelli *et al.*, 1983). This strategy originated from the disappointing outcome of technocratic and bureaucratic strategies (Ruttan, 1984 as cited in Hendrick and Titus, 1988). IRD was viewed as having several common characteristics, such as: people's lives can be improved by meeting their basic needs such as food, education, clothing and shelter; increasing productivity, reducing poverty and exploitation, and providing advantageous exchange with other economies; increasing people's involvement in development and self-reliance; and promoting autonomy through decentralisation (Lea and Chaudhri, 1983, pp.12-13). IRD's main aim was to integrate marginalised groups into society by promoting comprehensive rural development and government intervention in providing better social services such as health, education and rural infrastructure, whilst at the same time strengthening the administrative coordination of rural development (Cohen, 1980). However, Binswanger (1994) argued that many IRD projects encountered several problems which have been identified by the World Bank (1987), such as negative policies and no government commitment, necessary

equipment, institutional development or public participation, along with a complete absence of coordination (Binswanger, 1994, pp.292-293).

Overall, the main points of criticism of the mainstream development approach focused on the weaknesses in implementing effective co-ordination among government agencies and donors in practice, and it was found that IRD was vulnerable to the bureaucrats who could use the system to capture any economic gains for themselves (Ruttan, 1984). Due to these factors, structural adjustment programmes such as the direct anti-poverty approach were preferred (Gaiha, 1995 as cited in Bird *et al.*, 2002, p.44).

Rural development strategies under the structural adjustment period

Griffin (1978) indicated that in the rural areas of Asia wages among the poor had dropped significantly, and many rural populations were living below the 'poverty line' (i.e. the minimum level of income required for people to have a certain standard of living). Even though the GNP of LDCs such as Middle Eastern, East Asian, Southeast Asian, African and Latin American countries had increased during the post-war period, there was still either sluggish growth or stagnation in the economies of LDCs such as Honduras, Chile, Ghana, Bolivia, Bangladesh and Rwanda. Specifically, the lowest 40% of the population received only 10% of the nation's income, while the top 20% of the population received 65% of the nations' income (Adelman *et al.*, 1973 as cited in Rondinelli *et al.*, 1983).

There was a realisation that this increase in poverty was due to the failure of growth and increasing inequality, especially in Asian countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Philippines. International donors such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) had focused on 'redistribution with growth' (Ellis and Biggs, 2001; Ruttan, 1974; Stewart, 2019; Streeten and Burki, 1978), or 'growth with equity' (Rondinelli *et al.*, 1983), in order to tackle poverty among the rural poor by providing multi-purpose loan assistance and minimum-cost development projects, which aimed to assist small farms

and rural sector industries by increasing their productivity (Dixon, 1990). These policies differed slightly from the previous ones (growth maximisation), that were concerned with the 'redistribution of assets in order to make the poor more productive...redistribution of investment out in incremental GNP...redistribution of the existing stock' (Streeten and Burki, 1978, p.412).

Likewise, the rural development strategy which had been previously dominated by state-led rural development had changed to a market liberalisation strategy (neo-liberal globalisation policy). This change was due to the public sector being stretched too thin, the prioritization of physical capital, and financial controls which caused distortion and were therefore ineffective (Toye, 1993, p.70). For the market-led proponents, development in LDCs was considered more effective by letting the market set prices and wages and limiting state intervention in development policies (Brohman, 1996).

The market-led policy or neo-liberal policy was implemented through a structural adjustment programme (SAP). This programme was introduced to regulate the debt crisis which emerged in LDCs as a consequence of several debt problems such as the oil crisis of the 1970s and the burden of increasing debt interest payments borne by many LDCs. To control this problem and prevent it from happening again, LDCs which needed to apply for loans from the IMF and the WB were expected to implement several policy reforms. In particular, the policy reforms required by the IMF and WB were believed to enable a reduction of poverty and an improvement in the condition of LDCs, for instance reduction of inflation, currency devaluation, fiscal policy, trade liberalisation, labour market reform, financial liberalisation and political power (Oberdabernig, 2010; Rodrik, 1990). Despite these policy reforms, the outcomes of the reform were mixed. According to the WB's (1994) *Adjustment of Africa* report, many countries which had undergone a structural adjustment programme were less likely to improve. Likewise, Easterly (2005, p.20) concluded that 'structural adjustment did not succeed in adjusting macroeconomic policy and growth outcomes very much'.

In rural areas, the negative impact of the SAP had been witnessed through the worsened conditions of small farmers and peasants' due to the reduction in agricultural subsidies (Gonzalez, 2004, p.459). Moreover, the structural adjustment programmes were limited by 'an exclusive market approach to national government' and failed to produce successful economic growth, such as in Ecuador and Bolivia, far from what had been intended (Portes, 1997, p.239). Likewise, in India, economic liberalisation under SAP produced an adverse impact on Indian farmers who had to compete with farmers from other countries on a global scale and these Indian farmers received very minimal support from the government. At the extreme, the high cost of cultivation, depression and poverty led to more than 270,000 Indian farmer suicides since 1995 (Banerjee-Guha, 2013, p.1013; Patnaik, 2007). Kydd and Dorward (2004, p.956) further claimed that liberalised markets failed as a strategy to reduce poverty in sub-Saharan Africa because throughout historical experience liberalised markets strategy was rarely reduce poverty in rural areas. This was supported by Rodrik (1990, p.943) who argued that any liberalisation programmes which was not 'sustainable are likely to bring few benefits'.

The limitations of the state-led and market-led approaches to developing rural areas triggered an alternative approach. Rondinelli *et al.*, (1983, p.52) pointed out the need for a 'human-resource-intensive development strategy' which emphasised the extensive participation of rural people. Chambers (1995, p.32) saw this process as a 'shift in development thinking - from things to people'.

Rural development strategies under the people-centred development approach

It was not until the 1980s that rural development ideas began to be acknowledged by donor agencies such as the Department for International Development (DFID) in the UK, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Bank (Brown, 2005). This shift was driven by the biases in mainstream development which concentrated on the top-down approach (Chambers, 1997). Therefore, this was the time that farmers needed

to play an important role in agricultural research and these were put into practice in the rural development initiatives (Chambers, 1994b). Bird *et al.* (2002) expressed the people-centred development approach as ‘improving governance’ and being concerned with democratisation, decentralisation and participation. Thus, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) was widely undertaken by policy implementers to understand how local people convey their understanding of poverty such as ‘mapping and modelling, transect walks, matrix scoring, well-being grouping and ranking’ (Chambers, 1994a, p.1437).

The focus of the people-centred development approach is in line with the HD approach. In the Human Development Report 1993, five important pillars were outlined which defined the people-centred development approach:

new concepts of human security, new models of sustainable development, new partnerships between state and markets, new patterns of national and global governance, and new forms of international governance’ (UNDP, 1993, p.2)

The proponents of the HD approach, such as Sen (1989), were not only focused on the formation of the capabilities of the individual, but also on how the individual could participate in development (Nisbet, 2008). Human development has been considered as encompassing two important aspects: the ‘creation of capabilities’ and ‘the use of capabilities to form development’ (Chapter 4). The participation of the people in the economic, social and political spheres might enhance their capabilities because it can build skills. As a consequence it helps to identify the extent of people’s participation and to enhance human development.

People’s participation in decision making was considered as one of the strategies for alleviating poverty among the rural poor because it focused on the voice of the local people (Mohan and Stokke, 2000). It was principally understood that the local people or the beneficiaries were involved in planning, managing and making decision related to development (Nelson and Wright, 1995; Uphoff, 1992). Oakley (1991, p.19) claimed that there was no

specific consensus highlighting who should participate in rural development but suggest several groups that were usually being left out from development and decision making process; 'the rural poor, the rural excluded, small farmers or the last'. But Chambers (1997, p.11) argued that through participatory development (PD), 'the poor, weak, vulnerable and exploited should come first'. As such, it enabled people to resolve the deprivation trap - a mutually reinforcing situation of powerlessness, vulnerability, physical weakness, poverty and isolation - that is faced by those people who have been left out from decision making in their own development (Chambers, 1995, p.173). Narayan (2005) argued that the weak or powerless local people would be better-off when they participated and made decisions on matters which were related to their own lives. The debate on participation and empowerment will be discussed in Chapter 4.

The current trends of rural development in the twenty-first century

The key indicators and measurements in designing development policies have been influenced by the international governmental organisations which control the global financial resources. Thus, the planning, formulation and decision making of the development strategies were made on the basis of current income or the consumption of poverty indicators (Green and Hulme, 2005) and measurements found in PRSPs, MDGs and SDGs, despite their limitations and weaknesses as an explanatory power to understand rural poverty (Bird *et al.*, 2002; Green and Hulme, 2005) and policies to address the issue of the rural poor at micro-level and in different places. It can be seen that the current rural development trend since the post-war period has been segregated into two paradigms: first, a people's paradigm which emphasised engaging people in their own development such as in participatory development; and second, the paradigm of the continuation of economic growth which was incorporated into PRSPs and MDGs/SDGs.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)/Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Cornwall and Brock (2005) argue that Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and MDGs are the development policy instruments used by International Governmental Organisations (IGOs) such as the WB and the IMF in the development process. Both of these development policy instruments contain key concepts such as 'poverty reduction', 'participation' and 'empowerment'. Specifically, PRSPs, on the one hand, have been considered as 'a development instrument, styled out of pragmatism, backed with economic power', and MDGs, on the other hand, have been referred to as 'a normative framework, backed with a moral imperative' (Cornwall and Brock, 2005, p.9). Both of these policy instruments are dominated by IGOs which indirectly influence the development policies and strategies at the global level. It is important to note here that there are no specific policies or programmes which explicitly cater public participation in decision making in rural or agricultural activities, but the focus is more on development policies which identify 'rural with poverty'. Most of the theories of development are society- or economy-wide in scope (Ellis and Biggs, 2001, p.438). Therefore, the PRSPs and MDGs are considered as macro policies which society- or economy-wide and they are related to rural development during the process of policy implementation at the national, state and local level.

Many studies have suggested that the reform and introduction of PRSPs was heavily influenced by the internal political factors in the client countries (Collier and Levitsky, 1997; World Bank, 1998) and the failure of the structural adjustment programmes. In 1999, the WB and the IMF proposed a new development approach which would include participatory elements in their efforts to introduce poverty-reduction strategies, and these were known as PRSPs. PRSPs were adopted to help LDCs and their partners to increase the effect of their joint drive to reduce poverty (Craig and Porter, 2003, p.53) and 'to encourage broad-based growth and poverty, as well as associated external

financing needs and major sources of financing' (IMF, 2006). Basically, there are four topics which should be included in a PRSP:

macro and structural policies support sustainable growth in which the poor countries participate; how to improve governance - including public sector financial management; appropriate sectoral policies and programmes; and realistic costing and appropriate levels of funding for the major programmes (PRSP sourcebook, 2001, p. 17).

In preparing such documents, various stakeholders were required to sit together but, most importantly, PRSPs had to be arranged and prepared on the basis of the requirements of global donors' management and accountability and be able to be converted into measurable indicators (Craig and Porter, 2003). PRSPs have been claimed to still follow the neo-liberal perspective and to limit participation because the marginalised groups still remain (Bradshaw and Linneker, 2003). More importantly, the objective of PRSPs for poverty reduction did not take into consideration the fact that specific rural people might be less successful than others. This situation possibly reinforced the fact that the same experiences 'invited pseudo-participation that has become so prominent a part of the political landscape in many countries' (Cornwall and Brock, 2005, p.10).

Another development policy instrument introduced by the WB and the IMF was MDGs. Pieterse (2010, p.201) claimed that the UN, the IMF and the WB manipulated their development policies by focusing on pro-poor growth and concern about the social and human dimensions of development. MDGs were therefore considered to be 'a deliberate shorthand version of human development' (Vandermotele, 2011, pp.12-13) and to focus as much on basic 'human decency as on international political consensus' (Poku and Whitman, 2011, p.182). MDGs have been considered as one of the global strategies to reduce poverty in LDCs through multilateral actions (Hulme, 2010) because it involved various actors, specific key measurements and indicators, and at different level of analysis such as peoples and states (Poku and Whitman, 2011). The formation of MDGs has been considered as 'on-going' process

because there has no precise beginning and ending, its formation happened in different ways and at different periods of time (Hulme, 2009, 2010). But, one can say that it was started after the Millennium Declaration in 2000. The most notable documents which always been referred as having influential effect in the formation of MDGs were the UN Millennium Declaration of 2000, the Secretary-General report in World Summit in 2005, and UN Millennium Project by Sachs (Ziai, 2011, p.28).

At the centre of MDGs, there are eight goals formulated to reduce extreme poverty and expand the universal rights of 2015 in which each of the goals had its own subset of targets and indicators. These were ‘halving poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV/AIDS and malaria; ensuring environmental sustainability; and developing a global partnership for development’ (UN, 2015). MDGs functioned on the basis of these specific targets and indicators. Each of the targets and indicators was set in motion (Cornwall and Brock, 2005; Willis, 2004). These targets and indicators were monitored by the IMF and WB through PRSPs. The targets and indicators however need to be legitimately prepared and owned by the LDCs themselves and not controlled by the IGOs. As such, MDGs were actually ‘the product of intense political negotiation informed by analytical work’ (Hulme, 2009, p.47).

Rigg (2008) stated that MDGs were heavily debated and criticised in terms of the purposes and measurements used to achieve these eight goals. The realisation of the eight goals seemed to be hindered by difficulties such as a disassociation between ‘top/government’ and ‘bottom/local people’ actors (Renwick, 2011; Shoaf *et al.*, 2012; Ziai, 2011). This was because their implementation required the active collaboration of many actors such as government, civil society and marginalised groups (Van der Ploeg *et al.*, 2000). The failure to connect these major actors, as in Kenya and South Africa, might make it impossible to reduce poverty problems (Unterhalter and Dorward, 2013). MDGs also attracted criticism at the implementation level, because

they disengaged the top and bottom actors at the local level and highlighted the lack of capacity of LDCs in governance (Balisacan *et al.*, 2005; Ziai, 2011).

Even so, MDGs have been considered important and have achieved much success in terms of ‘human development, human poverty and human well-being despite its weaknesses’ (Vandermoortele, 2011, p.10); for example, the numbers of people living below the daily income level of \$1.25 decreased from 47% in 1990 to 24% in 2008 (Fehling *et al.*, 2013, p.1109). MDGs came to an end in 2015 and were replaced by Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or ‘the post-2015 moment’. SDGs were developed while the world was facing global issues such as a global financial crisis and critical international boundaries and thus the new development ideas had to be based on two important aspects: ‘development’ and ‘sustainability’ (Gore, 2015, p.721). So the aims of the SDGs were divided into three important aspects: public participation, political focus, and quantitative measurement; and lessons were learned from the MDGs (*see further UN, 2016*). The 17 SDGs are a continuation from the MDGs and the goals are considered more inclusive to cover not only LDCs but all UN member states. They are also supported by a total of 169 targets. What make the SDGs different from MDGs is in terms of the scale and content of the MDGs (UN, 2016). However, based on an *SDGs report (2017)* review, the current progress and advancements of the SDGs have been ‘uneven across regions, between the sexes, and among people of different ages, wealth, locales, including urban and rural dwellers’ (UNDESA, 2017). There were many challenges to achieving the SDGs, as such faster and more inclusive progress is needed in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda (UN, 2017).

From the discussion above, one common strategy used both in the implementation of the PRSPs and MDGs/SDGs is decentralisation. The decentralisation was ‘needed to restore markets, create or strengthen democracy, and promote good governance’ (Rondinelli, 2006, p.440). This good governance was heavily influenced by the neo-liberal economic model that emphasises the freedom of the individual and the private markets. The neo-liberals believed that the centralised decision making was not effective

because they were 'bound to be politically biased...decisions on matters of investment and capital accumulation were bound to be wrong' (Harvey, 2005, p.21). So, moving the decision making power away from the central government and closer to the local people could guarantee the 'efficient allocation of resources, and more accountability' (Craig and Porter, 2006, p.96).

Decentralisation is not a new concept because it had been introduced during the 1970s and early 1980s. During that period, many countries especially the LDCs were decentralising the decision making and administration from central to local levels because they believe it was a part of political and economic reforms and it enabled the countries to reduce poverty and stimulate economic growth (Dumenil and Levy, 2004; Harvey, 2005; Klein, 2007; Manor, 1999). In particular, Rondinelli (1981, p.596) argued that the existence of decentralisation was due to its ability to

overcome the severe limitations of multi-sectoral national planning by delegating responsibility for planning to officials who are closer to the problems...the need for more decentralised procedures of planning, stronger ties between planning and implementation, and diffusion of administrative capacity.

Likewise, the delegation of authority on planning and administration to the local level is considered necessary when the country is diverse in terms of geographical areas, regions, ethnics and cultures. As a consequence, decentralisation is considered as one of the best solutions because it promotes 'self-reliance, democratic decision making, popular participation in government, and accountability of public officials to citizens' (Rondinelli *et al.*, 1983, p.12) and it also can increase public participation in their own economic and development affairs (Manor, 1999; Parker, 1995; Rondinelli, 1981).

Decentralisation can be divided into three influential categories (Manor, 1999; Parker, 1995; Rondinelli, 1981): deconcentration, delegation, and devolution. First, deconcentration is considered as a weakest form of decentralisation

because there is no transfer of power from a central government to a local level (Conyers, 2006; Rondinelli, 1981; Mosse, 1995). It only involves the relocation of central government's office or any agencies/functions to a state or local level. Second, delegation refers to a transfer of power together with fiscal policy to lower levels of administration. This means the lower level has similar authority and responsibility with central government. Third, devolution is the most influential categories of decentralisation because the central government transfer the resources and power to local level authorities, and they are independent from central government. Despite its positive effects on many LDCs, decentralisation has been criticised because it is a form of neo-liberal ideas that emphasises 'the class's revenues and power' (Dumenil and Levy, 2004, p.2) through the 'restoration or reconstruction of the power of economic elites' (Harvey, 2005, p.19). Even so, in the twenty-first century, decentralisation has become a major aspect of rural development and poverty reduction (Binh and Ha, 2019; UNDESA, 2016; Sutiyo and Maharjan, 2017). It is used as one of the means of the 'localisation' of the SDGs at national and local level with the aim of providing a framework for local development policy and a means of achieving the SDGs (Global TaskForce (GTF), UNDP, 2016).

However, on the ground, the implementation of decentralisation has not always been free of obstacles (Alsop and Norton, 2004). Abdul-Rahaman and Adusah-Karikari (2019, p.669) found that development in rural areas of Northern Ghana was still dominated by the top-down approach and commented that this 'clearly contradicts the rationales for the drive towards participatory and decentralised' planning and decision making. This indicates that the process of decentralisation was still dominated by the central level and that prevents the flexibility of the local implementers. Likewise, in Malaysia, the support towards decentralisation was not translated into practice and there was a tendency by the central government to re-centralise the authority from local to central level (Nooi, 2008, p.128). This supports the argument by Rondinelli *et al.* (1983, p.36) that

...decentralization programs were centrally created but not linked to established local organizations and sources of political and financial support...authority is commonly delegated...but they are not given the resources to perform their functions...[and act as] bureaucratic instruments of the center rather than as generators of alternative values, preferences, and aspirations.

As well as centralised decision making problem, the domination of power in decision making by the traditional leadership, such as in rural South Africa (Leonard, 2019) and rural India (Fischer and Ali, 2019) has not only failed the decentralisation process but also public participation. Likewise, in rural China, the political elite capture in rural development programmes has limited the participation of the local people (Han and Goa, 2019). These examples have shown that the influence of power in the decentralisation process continues to play a crucial role in determining public participation (Hoe *et al.*, 2019). In this context, current rural development efforts to encourage public participation through the decentralisation of planning and decision making to local level must carefully consider the implementation process and the influence of power, which are discussed in Chapter 4.

Conclusion

The first section of this chapter discussed the conditions of rural areas after the Second World War. It was emphasised that the causes of the lack of development and of the existence of the rural poor in many LDCs were the traditional agricultural methods which did not provide a high return. It has been argued by development economists that an increase in productivity is important in order to eradicate poverty among rural people. However, the identification of the rural poor and the introduction of policy interventions was not a simple issue. There were many causes of rural poverty which differed as a result of time and location, and from one state to another. As a consequence, this created difficulties for the policy makers and development experts to formulate policy interventions which could actually reduce rural poverty.

In the second section the discussion focused on defining rural development. The origins of rural development and its definition were traced during the 1980s in parallel with the failure of both the mainstream development approach and the market-led approach in the development process. The discussion then moved on to a description of rural development in different development periods; during the mainstream development approach, the market-led approach and the people-centred development approach. The first approach to rural development was the mainstream development approach. Under this heading, the common strategies used by governments for poverty reduction and for increasing agricultural productivity were discussed. However, this policy intervention was perceived as not sustainable and less beneficial to the rural poor. The second period was identified as the structural adjustment period. In this period, policies of rural development were influenced by the structural adjustment which upheld market liberalisation and minimal state intervention. It was believed that trade liberalisation at the macro-level might benefit the rural poor by income distribution due to the economic growth achieved through job creation schemes in rural areas. This approach has been criticised for increasing the inequality between urban and rural areas and the conditions of the rural poor worsened. The discussion then turned to the third period of rural development strategies under the people-centred approach. It has been argued that rural development strategies were reformulated to involve rural people in planning their own development. This was in line with the human development approach which focused on human capabilities and the freedom of the individual.

In the final section the discussion moved on to the very current rural development trends in the twenty-first century, which have been PRSPs and MDGs/SDGs and implemented through decentralisation process. It has been contended that the use of decentralisation as one of the development strategies in the twenty-first century has contributed to several problems and weaken the implementation of public participation in decision making process. Thus it has undermined the effort to craft and formulate policy interventions

to tackle poverty problems and promote socially inclusive sustainable development.

The next chapter will discuss the roles of participation and empowerment in enhancing human well-being and human progress. It will offer a detailed discussion of the emergence of the concepts of participation and empowerment and their relationship with the theories of development and rural development.

Chapter 4

Participation and Power

Introduction

This chapter explores the central themes and arguments of public participation through a critical analysis of the academic literature. It seeks to examine public participation and its wider relation with economic development processes. Public participation is often used by government agencies as a mechanism for giving control and decision making to those who are affected by the decisions. This can clearly be seen in the typologies of public participation in Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation, Pretty's (1995) typology and White (1996) in the first section of this chapter. The assessment of participation will then be discussed in a development context and by conceptualising participation in decision making and its relations to power and empowerment. This section offers a review of the literature which explains the shortcomings of the public participation typologies and suggests that it must be assessed in the context of various contributory factors. The second section moves to power and empowerment and presents a detailed discussion of the origins of power and its relation to participation. The concept of power moves from 'power over' (Lukes, 1974; 2005) to 'alternatives to power' which discusses collective action with (Arendt, 1986) and the consciousness of publics (Freire, 1970) to gain empowerment. The final section of this chapter continues to consider the importance of power in the twenty-first century as seen especially by Sen (1980, 1999) through his capability approach.

The philosophical differences in understanding participation mean that it is a 'contested concept' (Day, 1997, p.423). The concept of public participation is 'problematic' (Mayo and Craig, 1995, p.6) and full of 'confusion and

vagueness' (Stiefel and Wolfe, 1994, p.4). Terms such as 'citizen' and 'public' can involve many people, such as individuals, public officials, professionals and interest groups (Reynolds, 1969) who have an interest in or concern about particular issues or events. The concept of participation has been argued in terms of who participates, what they participate in, how they participate and the reasons why they participate (Cohen and Uphoff, 1980, p.218). Despite considering participation in a very general sense, this current discussion is focused on public participation in the decision making process in economic and developmental issues and how it is a form of political participation.

The understanding of public participation in decision making over development has always been associated with the dichotomy between participation as a means and as an end (Brett, 2003; Cleaver, 2001; Goulet, 1989; Melkote and Steeves, 2001; Nelson and Wright, 1995; Oakley, 1991). On the one hand, participation as a means refers to the use of participation to achieve a stated goal or objective (Cleaver, 2001, p.37). It requires people's involvement in development programmes or projects in order to harness 'the existing physical, economic and social resources of rural people' (Oakley, 1991, p.116). Government agencies are obliged to involve people in decision making, but the main aim is to achieve the goals of the programme or project (Brett, 2003). Participation in this case is on a short-term basis and the existing power possessed by the local authorities, government agencies or target groups remains unchanged (Hickey and Mohan, 2004). In fact, Oakley (1991, p.8) claimed that the use of participation as a means is common among government agencies because they 'see participation as the means to improving the delivery systems of the projects they seek to implement'. In this approach, there is a tendency towards a situation in which the benefits of a project will be captured by the powerful members of a community when the government wants to obtain quick results (Parfitt, 2004, pp.539-540). Participation as an end refers to the use of participation as a way to transform power relations, and this concept has changed over time in order to develop and enhance people's capabilities to become actively involved in development initiatives (Oakley, 1991). In terms of power relations, participation as an end implies

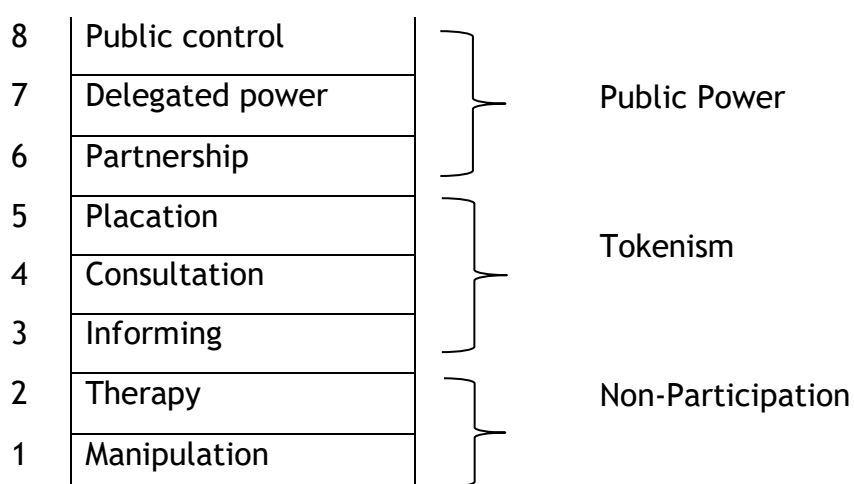
that local people have the power to decide and implement development initiatives and to play active roles, as opposed to being passive recipients. This can be seen in the participatory rural appraisal (PRA), which was designed to help local people to 'share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act' (Chambers, 1994b, p.953). However, Narayanan (2003, p.2484) claimed that some caution is necessary in this approach, as 'often, inequities in power and resources would also allow a powerful minority to claim their rights more forcefully at the expense of the rest of the people'.

Typologies of Public Participation

The popularity of involving people in their own development has produced several mechanisms for understanding and measuring the level of public participation. The most influential typology is Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation. This describes different levels of participation which are exemplified through the image of a ladder representing stages of public participation. It has been widely used in assessing the level of public participation in planning and decision making processes. Even so, in reality, full-participation is difficult to achieve as it requires the integration of publics at all levels of the decision making process. The most common level of participation is pseudo-participation, which Arnstein (1969, p.217) described as 'non-participation - that has been contrived by some to substitute for genuine participation'. At both of these levels, people are considered as objects and not subjects. People can be subjected to manipulation by planners and can be used as an excuse to reduce spending on social welfare. Also, people are often forced to work on a voluntary basis, and most importantly people are not given any decision making opportunities to improve themselves. So, at these levels, participation means the provision of only basic services by the government or by development planners (Arnstein, 1969; Choguill, 1996; Smith, 1998).

Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation has eight rungs, representing manipulation, therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership,

delegated power and public control (Figure 4.1). The two lower rungs are differentiated by the limitations of power, and the middle rungs of informing, consultation and placation are where the voice of the people is heard but the final decision is still retained by the power holders. The three highest rungs, partnership, delegated power and public control, demonstrate power being taken by the people. This ladder has been considered important for assessing the level of public participation in the decision making process. More precisely, people are viewed to have been participated and empowered when they achieve the public control level, if not their participation might be regarded to be ‘tokenism’ and ‘non-participation’, in which people are considered lack of participation and are easily manipulated by the development experts.



Source: Arnstein, 1969, p.217

Figure 4.1: Arnstein’s Ladder of Participation (1969)

However, Tritter and McCallum (2006) identified three main problems with Arnstein’s ladder in that it cannot account for understanding involvement in health studies. First, the ladder ignores the possible factors which may influence people’s participation. Second, the ladder treats public participation as a linear development, which means it does not take into account other categories. Third, the ladder was criticised for associating the changing level of power with roles and responsibilities, whereas most of the

time individuals do not associate their participation in relation to the level of power. Despite several valid criticisms of Arnstein's ladder its role in understanding participation remains important as a starting point in this thesis because of its simple heuristic value. Probably because of this simplicity Arnstein's ladder has shaped most of the literature on participation and empowerment even though it has limited significance in particular contexts (Bishop and Davis, 2002). For example, several typologies of participation have been adapted from Arnstein's ladder of participation to examine various participation programmes, such as children's participation, participatory budgeting systems and participatory development programmes. Even though the name of the typology is different, the main method in all of them for understanding participation was based on a spectrum and ladder - from one end to another end - and has thus resembled Arnstein's ladder of participation. For instance, IGOs such as the UN have used Arnstein's ladder for understanding children's participation programmes. It was used to understand whether children's participation was actually empowered or disempowered (manipulation and tokenism): 'The Ladder of Participation diagram is designed to serve as a beginning typology for thinking about children's participation in projects' (UNICEF, 1992, p.9). Second, the World Bank in its publication on measuring the effectiveness of a participatory budgeting system used McGee's four types of participation - information sharing, consultation, joint decision making, and initiation and control by stakeholders (Fölscher, 2007, p.153) - which was actually adapted from Arnstein's ladder of participation (McGee, 2003, p.11). In addition, originating from Arnstein's ladder of participation (Davis and Andrew, 2017; Jami and Walsh, 2014), another typology known as the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum has been developed and is often used by the World Bank and the UN

Public participation can include a range of activities and approaches, ranging from persuading the public of a particular view to the delegation of authority to the public. IAP2 has synthesized much thinking into what is termed the continuum of public participation. Each of the points along the continuum represents different approaches with distinct outcomes (Ground, 2003, p.17)

The IAP2 spectrum describes how citizen participation in decision making can follow different participation levels, for example from informing to empowering the public in the decision making process. It helps to explain the various level of participation. The UN has also used this spectrum in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in order to understand stakeholder engagement in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

The ‘Spectrum of Public Participation’ tool of the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) provides a way to explore different engagement levels, from ‘informing’ to ‘empowering’ (United Nations, 2017, p.1)

Goal	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Description	Provide public with balanced information to help them understand a problem and/or a solution	Obtain feedback from the public on analysis, alternatives or a decision	Work directly with the public to hear the concerns of the public	Partner with the public throughout the process and develop alternatives and to identify the preferred solution	Place the final decision in the hands of the public



Source: UNDESA, 2019, p.17

Figure 4.2: The International Association for Public Participation Spectrum

The explanation given above shows that many of the common typologies of participation used by the IGOs were actually adapted from and developed based on Arnstein’s ladder. In this study it is therefore appropriate to use Arnstein’s ladder as an organising framework along with other typologies such as those of Pateman (1970), Pretty (1995) and White (1996) to understand public participation in decision making. The influence of Arnstein’s ladder in academic works can also be seen from its numerous citations, which number ‘more than 17,000, with more than 13,000 of those citations in the past decade’ (Slotterback and Lauria, 2019, p.183).

Pateman (1970, p.71) identified three levels of participation: pseudo, partial and full participation, and participation most frequently falls into the pseudo category (described as non-participation in Arnstein's ladder of participation). Instead of focusing on the importance of interaction between society and government, Pateman was more concerned with the connection between participation and representative democracy (Bishop and Davis, 2002). Pateman (2012) saw 'active publicity at its centre' in participatory democracy: it gives more opportunities for publics to participate in political decision making as opposed to the restricted roles implied by elitist democracy (Pateman, 1970; Macpherson, 1977; Barber, 1984; Morrell, 1999; Vitale, 2006; Hayward, 2007; Wolfe, 1985). She argued that the need to participate in political decision making is considered important as a developmental process, especially in educating publics. This can be achieved by expanding the power of publics by giving them opportunities for participation and deliberation. This extension of power can demonstrate integral advantages such as education, control and participation (Pateman, 1970; Wolfe, 1985; Morell, 1999).

Together with Arnstein and Pateman, Pretty (1995) (Table 4.1) also recognised various typologies of participation. Pretty's (1995, p.1251) typology focused on the involvement and empowerment of 'diverse groups of people' in development programmes without being controlled by the authorities. Pretty's (1995, p.1252) typology of participation ranged from controlled participation in which people are told what is going to happen and therefore simply have to follow instructions, to self-mobilisation in which they are free to act without any interference.

Hart (1992, cited in Pretty, 1995, p.1253) claimed that participation which involved types one to four indicated non-participation because it only involved manipulation and thus the outcomes of the participation would not provide any positive effects on people. Pretty (1995, p.1253) suggested that moving down through the typology was important to ensure the effectiveness of projects which involve participation. In doing this, the participants in the projects, whether institutions or individuals, need to identify the most enhanced approach which moves away from 'passive, consultative and

incentive-driven participation toward the interactive' participation (Pretty (1995, p.1252).

Tunstall (2001) stated that in order to assess participation, the utilisation of Arnstein's (1969) ladder, Pateman's (1970) model and Pretty's (1995) typology is not simple since every technique has difference of idea regarding the level of 'genuine' participation and this varies from one case to another. Arnstein (1969) asserted that power is the ideal intention of participation, Pateman (1970) was concerned with the shift of power from state to publics, and for Pretty (1995, p.1253), 'it was when people were involved in decision making during all stages of the projects...that the best results occurred'. In practice, with the shift from the predominance of modernisation theories to the new development paradigm (Chapter 2), Arnstein's ladder (1969) and Pretty's (1995) typology were widely used to assess people's participation in the development process which appears to relate to the issue of 'real' participation and the issue of measurement of the extent to which people are actually participating. Nevertheless, these typologies are open to criticism because of the implicit continuum that publics need to achieve and because they do not account for other categories which appear in-between the continuum: 'defining participation as a continuum avoids difficulties of precision with a contested concept, but also misses the different reasons for participation' (Bishop and Davis, 2002, p.18). This is because 'participation is unequal across different sections of society, reflecting the unequal distribution of power and resources in society' (Brodie *et al.*, 2009, p.27).

Table 4.1: A Typology of Participation

Typology	Characteristics of each type
1. Manipulative participation	Participation is simply a pretence, with people's representatives on an official board but who are unelected and have no power
2. Passive participation	People participate by being told what has been decided or has already happened. This involves unilateral announcements by an administration or project management without any listening to people's responses. The information being shared belongs only to external professionals.
3. Participation by consultation	People participate by being consulted or by answering questions. External agents define problems and information gathering processes, and so control analysis. Such a consultative process does not concede any share in decision making, and professionals are under no obligation to take on board people's views.
4. Participation for material incentives	People participate by contributing resources, for examples, labour in return for food, cash or other material incentives. Farmers may provide the fields and labour, but are involved in neither experimentation nor the process of learning. It is very common to see this called participation, yet people have no stake in prolonging technologies or practices when the incentives end.
5. Functional participation	Participation seen by external agencies as a means to achieve project goals, especially reduced costs. People may participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project. Such involvement may be interactive and involve shared decision making, but tends to arise only after major decisions have already been made by external agents. At worst, local people may still only be co-opted to serve external goals.
6. Interactive participation	People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and the formation or strengthening of local institutions. Participation is seen as a right, not just the means to achieve the project goals. The process involves interdisciplinary methodologies which seek multiple perspectives and make use of systemic or structured learning processes. Groups take control over local decisions and determine how the available resources are used, so they have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.
7. Self-mobilisation	People participate by taking initiatives independently of external institutions to change systems. They develop contacts with external institutions for the resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used. Self-mobilisation can spread if governments and NGOs provide an enabling framework of support. Such self-initiated mobilisation may or may not challenge existing distributions of wealth and power.

Source: Pretty, 1995, p.1252

Following the acceptance that the ladder of public participation may not be enough to explain people's participation because it only explains 'what is citizen participation and how it can be done' (Arnstein, 1969), it can be seen that it ignored the need to understand how and why people participate in

decision making in economic and development programmes. The ladder fails to take into consideration the different enabling and disabling social context in encouraging people to participate, that is, it fails to explain how progression through the stages of ladder can be prevented by the social context. It should be noted that this current study had no intention to find causal factors which contribute to people's participation because this has been thoroughly discussed elsewhere (see Pattie and Johnston, 1998; Verba, 1967; Whiteley, 2012), but was designed to understand the nature, process and extent of public participation in decision making at the local level.

White (1996) provided some insights on the interests in participation by using less of the 'ladder' construct compared with Arnstein and Pretty and focusing more on 'how people make use of participation' (Cornwall, 2008, p.271). The forms of participation are divided into four; nominal, instrumental, representative and transformative, and this clarifies two main interests, a development agency (top-down) and local people (bottom-up), in order to understand more fully the 'real' participation on the ground. The first type is nominal participation. From the perspective of a development agency, this participation is only meant to acquire legitimacy from local people. On the other hand, local people will participate in this form because they assume it to be inclusion in order to get benefits from their participation. However, White (1996) considered this participation as 'displaying' that the development agency performs some work. Second, the instrumental type of participation is used by the development agency as an approach to reduce financial cost and this is identified as a means of increasing the 'efficiency' of service delivery. For local people, this form of participation is a 'cost' but it is inevitable in order for them to get local facilities. The purpose of this participation is only as a means to fulfil both cost effectiveness and local facilities for people. The third form of participation is representative. Here the main aim is to give local people a voice in their own local development activities. Local people need to participate in order to influence the project and this is identified as leverage. For a development agency, this aims to ensure the sustainability of the project and avoid local people being

dependent on them. Finally, participation acts as both a means and an end. Both the development agency and local people treat this form of participation as an empowerment. It encourages local people to decide on and take action in economic development projects. This is known as transformative participation (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Interests in Participation

Form	Top-Down	Bottom-up	Function
Nominal	Legitimation	Inclusion	Display
Instrumental	Efficiency	Cost	Means
Representative	Sustainability	Leverage	Voice
Transformative	Empowerment	Empowerment	Means/End

Source: White, 1996, p.7

Even so, interests between a development agency and local people are difficult to realise because it depends on the social context and the power relations where the participation occurs. Narayan (2003, p.2486) cautioned that such approaches to participation ‘instead of challenging the power relationship, may promote participation in the existing power structure’. As discussed in the previous section, typologies of public participation are limited in their ability to take into account the complex components which are intertwined within a society, such as power relations which have shaped the implementation of public participation on the ground (Bardhan, 2002; Cooke, 2004; Kothari, 2001; Michener, 1998; Oakley, 1991; Ribot, 2007; Platteau and Abraham, 2002). There is therefore a need to discuss the circumstances which might enable or disable public participation in decision making through the understanding of power at the lower levels.

Power relations in participation

The discourse of participation above has revealed the key question of power relations between the citizen and state or development bureaus (Nelson and Wright, 1995). That means, participation is not happen unexpectedly and people cannot simply participate. The government

... cannot 'give' empowerment to their 'beneficiaries', 'targets of development' or 'clients': to be 'participants' people have to be able to use their 'power to' to negotiate and transform those hopefully willing partners who have institutional and structural 'power over' (Nelson and Wright, 1995, p.18)

Nelson and Wright (1995) further questioned whether the power relations which already exist encourage transformation or further fulfil the intentions of the government. Thus, one of the important aspects which needs to be taken into consideration is the relationship between participation and the concept of power. This issue was highlighted by the UNRISD, which emphasised three important facets: 'the sharing of power and of scarce resources; deliberate efforts by social groups to control their own destinies and improve their living conditions; and opening up opportunities 'from below'' (UNRISD, cited in Oakley *et al.*, 1984, p.26). Power has been considered to be imperative in the participation process because, for people to take part in development, they require power in order to change or to undertake action, which can be accomplished by way of the possession of 'power'. The element of power had formerly been found at the macro and central levels only, thus with participation, it is argued that powerless and marginal groups of people can be empowered (Kothari, 2001). Arnstein (1969) argued that the main aim for powerless people was in relation to power and control in order to shape the decision making which influence their living conditions.

Existing power relations at the local level can contribute to inequalities because of the existence of 'caste hierarchy, gender discrimination, social exclusion and class structure' (Alsop and Norton, 2004; Narayanan, 2003, p.2485). The failure to understand this relation can exclude people and demoralise them from wanting to participate. The non-participation of local people is often characterised by the exclusion of the most affected group from the decision making processes (Steven *et al.*, 2003, p.92). At the local level, non-participation occurs because of political elites who are unwilling to surrender their power to local people (Alsop and Norton, 2004; Kothari, 2001) and thus contribute to exclusion. Mosse (2001) stated that the power relations which exist between village leaders and villagers reproduce the existence of a

power structure, and as a result participation is often captured by the local elite (Lange, 2008). On the one hand, all segments of the society should be involved in their own economic and development decision-making processes but on the other hand, as the economy picked up, the existing holders of local power resumed their control and conflicts inevitably occurred 'over goals, governance and implementation' (Gaventa, 1998, p.54). The economic interests of the local elites which have dominated the development programmes within the village facilitated the 'tyranny' towards local people (Cooke and Kothari, 2001). This situation not only widens the disenchantment of local people about wanting to participate, but also demoralises them and reduces their confidence that 'their interests will be represented' (White, 1996, p.11). In this case, the non-participation of local not because they are 'incapable', rather it is because of power relations and elite capture that exists at local level (Bardhan, 2002).

Furthermore, the lack of public participation in decision making over development is not only due to the domination by the local elites but also the fact that the development projects were designed to suit the predetermined goals identified by policy makers, and these reproduced existing inequalities (Jones, 2003, p.599). This process normally favours the local elites and is far from representing the voice of the local people and participation is a key part of the neo-liberal paradigm (Hickey and Mohan, 2004). So participation is commonly used as an instrument of control and cannot easily be 'managed from below'. As a consequence, withdrawing from the participation might be the best option for local people and 'one can grow tired of being an 'active public'' (White, 1996, pp.11-12). This suggests that the co-option problem in participation enables or disables public participation in economic and development decision making. The co-option by public officials can be made through three important components: 'projects, professionals and organisations', which can promote either participation or control (Craig and Porter, 1997, p.229). Eversole (2011, p.57) pointed out that although policy makers were genuine in their desire to enable high levels of community involvement, the structure and the management of the programme had not

been designed to accommodate ideas and suggestions from members of the community. For example, Oakley (1991) argued that the organisations for rural people to gain access to the existing development system such as 'co-operatives, rural unions, farmers' associations, credit and saving associations' have a tendency to be controlled by the government (Cooke, 2004) and are less likely to represent the voice of the local people. In this case, the process of participation and its relation to power must be handled with caution because both can 'conceal and reinforce oppressions and injustices in their various manifestations' (Cooke and Kothari, 2001, p.24). It is therefore important to analyse the concept of power and its influence on participation.

Power and empowerment

The concept of power contains a complex meaning and involves a problematic notion (Gohler, 2009). It is usually associated with how people cope with limitations or react to something which limits their ability to achieve their goals. Parsons (1963, p.232) suggested that power is related to 'the capacity of persons or collectivities 'to get things done' effectively', whilst Martin (1971, p.241) described power as 'any kind of influence exercised by objects, individuals, or groups upon each other'. Power in the context of development can be defined as being a negative or positive exercise of control. In the negative perception, 'power over' has been described as having a win-lose relationship in which people who are involved can exercise suppression, force and coercion in order to get the other person to follow or obey (VeneKlesen and Miller, 2002). Positive power involves 'power to', 'power with' and 'power within'. These types of power are considered more subtle and more focused on creating harmonious relationships in which the increase in the power of one person will increase the power of another person. 'Power to' refers to the ability of a person to inspire others, and 'power with' describes how a person is able to find a ground to share power with others through cooperation and collaboration. 'Power within' has to do with the production of trust within oneself, and the possession of the self-knowledge required in order to refuse

demands that are considered inappropriate or unrelated (VeneKlesen and Miller, 2002).

The concept of power is particularly complex in the realm of politics. Here the most common arguments involve making decisions and ensuring the compliance of the people in terms of the decisions made. The emergence of the power concept can be discovered from the work of seventeenth-century philosopher Hobbes (Ball, 1988; Clegg 1989). Power has commonly been associated to domination and the capacity to influence others, in which power is based in coercion, oppression and force (Arendt, 1986). Formerly, it emerged as a concept that emphasised the domination exercised by individuals, and this concept has been reformulated by several scholars such as Dahl (1957), Polsby (1960), Bachrach and Baratz (1962, 1963) and Lukes (1974, 2005). The concept of power by Lukes (1974) has been frequently cited by many scholars. He described the concept of power from the view of pluralist, in which people protect their power through domination over others. He believed that from several categories of power, 'power over' was the main aim of examining power relations - an interest in understanding the process of acquiring of people's acceptance by controlling or preventing their opposition (Lukes, 1974, p.34). He classified three views of power: the view of pluralists (the one-dimensional view), the view of their critics (two-dimensional), and the three-dimensional view (Lukes, 1974, 2005).

The one-dimensional view of power

The main ideas of the one-dimensional view of power according to Lukes (1974, p.19) centred on '*behaviour in the making of decisions on issues over there is an observable conflict of (subjective) interests, seen as express policy preferences, revealed by political participation*' (emphases in the original). These refer to power as 'a capacity to achieve one's aims in the face of opposition' (Held, 2006, p.160). One of the most commonly used definitions was by Dahl (1957, pp.201-202), who proposed the 'intuitive idea of power' as 'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B

would not otherwise do'. A and B here are actors such as individuals, officers, groups or governments, and when A, for example, might possess variety of resources and authority, B, who does not, needs to follow the orders of A (Dahl, 1957, pp.202-203). The concern of Dahl's idea was on 'the exercise of power' by determining the amount of power, how many alternatives have been adopted (success) or how many have been rejected (failure). According to Dahl (1961), the most influential people are those who have managed to secure that the policies which they have initiated are adopted successfully. Dahl (1957, p.205) claimed that the most important thing was not to 'determine the existence of power but to make comparisons' between 'more power than, less power than and equal power'. Observable behaviour or actual behaviour was important for identifying power which involves what can be done by examining the decision making process. Those who are able to secure success in their decision making are considered to be powerful. Decisions are made on controversial issues which involve conflict, such as policy preferences which are portrayed through political participation.

This one-dimensional view has been criticised as narrowly focusing on power as portrayed in concrete decisions. Power can also be exercised through non-decision making (Swartz, 2007), when a decision-maker makes a non-decision when his/her values are opposed or challenged. This can be done by individuals or groups of people to influence the 'mobilisation of bias in the community; of the dominant values and the political myths, rituals, and institutions' to limit decision making (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962, p.950). The limitations of the one-dimensional view will be discussed further in the next section.

The two-dimensional view of power

The second dimension of power emerged from the work of Bachrach and Baratz (1962, 1970). Lukes (1974, pp.24-25) focused on the two-dimensional view of power which involves

a *qualified critique* of the *behavioural focus* of the first view...and it allows for consideration of the ways in which *decisions* are prevented from being taken on *potential issues* over which there is an observable *conflict* of (subjective) *interests*, seen as embodied in express policy preferences and sub-political grievances.

Here the concept of power is considered to have two faces. The first face involves the discussion of the one-dimensional view of power which was only rooted in concrete decisions. However, this view of power was too limited and ignored the exercise of power in non-decision making. The main point is that individuals or groups of people were considered to have power when they 'consciously or unconsciously created or reinforced barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962, p.949). The first face of power ignored the 'unmeasurable elements' and claimed that it was not important for power analysis and as a result exposed itself to criticism. Bachrach and Baratz (1970, p.7) on the one hand acknowledged the exercise of 'power over' as in the one-dimensional view and on the other hand claimed that

Power is also exercised when A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A.

Bachrach and Baratz (1962) argued that the first face of power was claimed only to be concerned with concrete decisions by focusing excessively on 'initiating, deciding and vetoing' a decision. This resulted in the ignorance of power as 'exercised by confining the scope of decision making to relatively 'safe' issues' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962, p.948). What was important was 'if and how' the political actors 'exercise it and what effects it has on the political process and other actors within the system' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970, p.50). Moreover, two-dimensional power is concerned with both decision making and non-decision making. Bachrach and Baratz (1970) argued that power can not only be seen from concrete decisions, but also in non-decision

making when political actors exercise their power by suffocating the issues before they can

even [be] voiced; or kept covert; or killed before they gain access to the relevant decision making arena; or, failing all these things, maimed or destroyed in the decision-implementing stage of the policy process (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970, p.44)

The third concern was over issues and potential issues; the pluralists tended to focus on 'key issues' which involve disagreements between two or more groups. Bachrach and Baratz (1970), however, did not accept that groups can disagree on unimportant and on important issues. The important or the key issues thus refer to any potential challenge to the current predominant values of the political actors, so they might seek to keep such issues off the agenda. The fourth, face of power was concerned with observable (overt or covert) conflict. The argument of the two faces of power was also related to the interest between people who engaged in non-decision making and the interests of those they exclude from the political system (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970). The conflict of the interest between these two groups can be empirically observed in overt or covert grievances and the 'consciously articulated and observable'.

The three-dimensional view of power

The three dimensional view of power was a response to the weaknesses of the one-dimensional and two-dimensional views of power. Accordingly, Lukes (1974, 2005, pp.25-28) argued that the two-dimensional view of power was inadequate: first, both the one- and two-dimensional views of power focused too much on behaviourism, second, the two-dimensional view of power was concerned with observable conflict and third, non-decision making only exists when there are grievances when entry to the political process is denied.

In terms of behaviourism, Lukes (1974, 2005, p.26) claimed that both the one- and the two-dimensional views of power focused on 'actual behaviour' and on

the study of concrete decisions. This was because the inaction of individuals might be influenced by 'socially structured and culturally patterned behaviour' and cannot be observed as an 'individually chosen act[s]'. Second, Lukes (1974, 2005, p.7) claimed that the two-dimensional view was inadequate because it focused only on observable conflicts; power can only be expressed when there are cases of overt and covert conflict. This was, however, limited when there were two situations; the existence of manipulation and authority, and that situation (manipulation and authority) 'is highly unsatisfactory to suppose that power is only exercised in situations of such conflict' (Lukes, 2005, p.27). Finally, non-decision making was claimed to exist when there were grievances which prevented individuals from entry into the political process. This claim, however, was limited because there is a situation in which power is exercised by preventing that grievance by influencing the values and shaping the perceptions. For Lukes (1974, p.28) the most important thing was to focus also on '*latent conflict*, which consists in a contradiction between the interests of those exercising power and the *real interests* of those they exclude'.

Alternative views of power

With the rise of the idea of 'power to - as a capacity for action', the concept of 'power over' (Arendt, 1986) became less dominant in understanding of the concept of power. The understanding of power moved to 'more systemic, less agent-specific, perceptions of power that see it as more generally constitutive of reality' (Haugaard and Clegg, 2009, p.3). This shift in ideas was popularised by Arendt (1970). The focus of the ideas was not on power to dominate, but on any individual or group actions not affecting others, and this type of 'power is constitutive for society' (Pitkin, 1972, cited in Gohler, 2009, p.29).

Lukes's (1974, 2005) concept of power echoed the traditional view of power as the capacity of one person to dominate others to act on their command. It has been argued, however, that this concept of power has to be looked at from different perspectives; power needs to move beyond 'the question of Who

rules Whom?' Power, strength, force, authority and violence - these are but words to indicate the means by which man rules over man' (Arendt, 1970, p.43). Arendt (1970, 1972) believed that the use of the terms as synonyms not only generated confusion but also produced the defect of the realities which are attached to them. For example, strength was understood as a strong or weak characteristic of an individual. It is considered as an individual property, 'the property inherent in an object or person and belongs to its character' (Arendt, 1972, p.143). Different from strength, power is a characteristic of collective action where people connecting with similar political purpose. Next, force is considered as a natural phenomenon, however, power is considered as 'a human creation...a collective achievement' (Passerin d'entrèves, 1989, p.326). Authority, on the one hand, has been described as being absolute and unquestionable by others and it has been linked with respect. Its application is based on 'respect for the person or the office' (Arendt, 1972, p.144) (see further Arendt, 1968). On the other hand, violence is specifically defined as a tool which is usually used by dominant persons for 'the purpose of multiplying natural strength until, in the last stage of their development, they can substitute for it' (Arendt, 1986, p.65). Unlike violence, power 'is actually the very condition enabling a group of people to think and act in terms of the means-end category' (Arendt, 1972, p.150). That means, power is based on agreement and rational deliberation between people and not based on coercion. Overall, Arendt's (1986) concept of power shifted from the concept of 'power over' to 'power to' and explicitly rejected the notions of strength, force, authority and violence as equal to power. Arendt (1970, p.44) therefore defined power as

... the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together. When we say of somebody that he is 'in power,' we actually refer to his being empowered by a certain number of people to act in their name. The moment the group, from which the power originated to begin with...disappears, 'his power' also vanishes.

The fundamental idea of Arendt's (1970, 1972) conception of power focuses not on the rule of men over men, but it focuses on the act in concert, which effectively means that the power is constitutive of the society (Habermas, 1977). According to Arendt, power does not belong to an individual, but to a group of people. It was a 'self-referential relation, not referring to one individual, but to a group and therefore to a community of individuals' (Gohler, 2009, p.32). The ability of people to act in concert appears when they share a similar form of life, such as the rules and the structures which they create and which are accepted by the group or community as the best way to achieve cooperation towards a common goal (Young, 2002, p.227). When we say 'act', we mean that a person can initiate any activities and engage in actions which are related to his or her life, however, the action cannot be done in isolation from others; it must be done collectively with other people. Arendt (1958, p.190) argued that isolation from others means the deprivation of the capacity to act. In this respect, the ability of people to act in concert needs them to feel free to speak out, to match their words by their actions and to act with the consent of other members, and all this can only be achieved when the individuals in a group accept the need for unity (Passerin d'Entrèves, 1989, p.319). This means that power and the empowerment of people require the act of togetherness and do not focus on the individual but rather build it collectively. Rather than say that someone is empowered, it is better 'to say that someone is empowered by a certain number of people' (Frazer and Hutchings, 2008, p.100).

Arendt's concept of power focused on collective action through the 'collective effect of speech in which reaching agreement is an end in itself for all those involved' (Habermas, 1977, p.6). This means that if power is generated through communicative action on a collective basis but without speech, 'the action would lose its revelatory quality' (Passerin d'Entrèves, 1989, p.321). Speech enables people in 'the interpretation of meaning, the articulation of new ideas, the dynamics of persuasion, the linking of understanding and action' (Young, 2002, p.227). The communicative action involved in shared speech focuses on reaching agreement between the participants and are in

‘unconstrained communication’ (Habermas, 1977, p.18). Those who are involved in collective action need to communicate with each other to deliberate their goals, opinions, plans and strategies to solve problems. This means that communication between people in order to reach an agreement generates power and empowerment for the people involved (Menge, 2019). This requires collective action by individuals or for groups of people to act autonomously without any repression or oppression (Gohler, 2009) and any restraint of communication between people can contribute to the absence of power and empowerment. Arendt believed that individuals must work collectively and that the empowerment of people is achieved through common will formed in non-coercive communication. This so-called consensual approach to power can be traced back the concept of people’s power in ancient Athens and Rome (Lukes, 1974). Arendt’s communicative power emphasised power as ‘exclusive[ly] to praxis, to the speaking and acting together of individuals’ (Habermas, 1977, p.15).

The understanding of ‘power to’ as the capacity to act collectively and encourage communication was also advanced by Freire (1970), who described the importance of education as a tool for liberalisation and for making the oppressed ‘conscious’ of freedom and able to avoid being subjected by oppressors Freire (1970) believed that education has the potential to both liberate and empower people and that although it can be used to reinforce a current regime of oppression, it can also be the catalyst for change to ‘a more free and democratic society’ (Thomas, 2009, p.254). For instance, the form of education which Freire described as oppressive was the ‘banking’ concept of education. This form of education imposes limited action on students, who act simply as passive recipients of knowledge and are not free to make decisions or to express themselves. Freire (1970) considered this form of education as ‘an instrument of oppression rather than an instrument of liberation’ (Blackburn, 2000, p.6). It means that students are unable to transform and liberate themselves from the oppression conditions thus disempowered them.

As an alternative, instead of the 'banking' concept of education, Freire (1970) proposed the 'liberatory' concept of education. The liberatory concept of education played an important part in Freire's work in which he advocated that students or the oppressed can be empowered when they become active problem-solvers and that the teacher/student dichotomy must first be resolved by making everyone both teachers *and* students at the same time (Freire, 1970, p.53). In particular, Freire's liberatory concept focused on explaining how people become empowered through problem-posing education by which people can

...develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation (Freire, 1970, p.64)

In this type of education, students/people are encouraged to become active in explaining their conditions, defining problems and deliberating ideas in order to solve the problems around them and thus empowered to change their oppressed conditions (Abdul Razzak, 2020; Thomas, 2009). In this way, people's consciousness has been considered important for social change because a fuller awareness of their situation can help people to understand that even an historical reality can be changed (Freire, 1970, p.64). The basic idea of Freire's liberating education is 'consciousness', which means 'the process by which humans become more aware of the sources of their oppression' (Blackburn, 2000, p.7). Consciousness and empowerment can be developed through learning and continuous interaction between students and teachers in 'an open and non-hierarchical manner', which means through the dialogical method of education (Thomas, 2009, p.255). Freire (1970) emphasised that when people engaged in dialogue, they are aware of the existence of their exploitation by oppressors. The dialogical approach has been described as people's attempts to name the world around them and thus become able to transform it; in this way, dialogue becomes the means for people to recognise their significance as individual human beings (Freire, 1970, p.69). Dialogue must not be treated as a simple conversation between people,

but must be understood as a way of understanding more clearly a particular object or issue instead of simply being permanently curious about it (Abdul Razzak, 2020, p.1005). Dialogue helps people who have been excluded to move on from understanding to collective learning and the changes which it can give them (Lissovoy and Cook, 2020, p.81).

This concept of power is identical to that proposed by Arendt (1986) which focused on the need of people to act collectively for social change. In particular, social change for the oppressed requires action in ‘fellowship and solidarity’ and not in ‘isolation or individualism’ (Freire, 1970, p.66). However, in most local programmes provided by the government, Freire (2000, p.94) cautioned that commonly ‘they [the government] approach the peasant or urban masses [local villagers] with projects which may correspond to their own view of world, but not to that of the people’, thus limit the empowerment of local people.

In summary, Arendt and Freire asserted the significance of ‘power to’ and connected the concept of power through problem-posing education to collaborative action by people. Both of these authors have different conceptualisation of power as discussed by Lukes’s (1974, 2005) three faces. Arendt (1970) claimed the importance of communicative action on a collective basis and Freire (1970) emphasised the power of dialogical form of education for liberalisation. These diversities of the concept of power are crucial for the ‘understanding of society’ (Haugaard and Clegg, 2009, p.1). In practice, the concept of power in the twenty-first century was discussed in Sen’s (1980, 1999) capability approach to understanding the empowerment of people in their own development. The next section focuses on the discussion of empowerment in the practical context of Sen’s capability approach and the arguments on this approach.

Empowerment in the twenty-first century

As the discussion above has shown, people are said to be empowered through various ways such as collective action (Arendt, 1986) and education (Freire, 1970). Both methods are regarded imperative for public participation and empowerment. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Sen (1999) saw development as ‘a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy’ (Sen, 1999, p.36). For Sen (1999), any social arrangements are developed by endeavouring to increase people’s capabilities and this includes the removal of violations of their civil rights and limited political dialogue and opportunity to participate in economic and development activities. In an attempt to emphasise the importance of freedom, Sen (1980, 1999) introduced the concept of capability; that is, power and empowerment were understood through the concept of the capabilities of the individual (this will be discussed in detail in the next section). Sen (1993, p.30) described the capability approach as the awareness of people of their ability to achieve things simply by living. The capability approach focuses on two important elements: functionings and capabilities (Sen, 1980 1999) (see further elements in Alkire, 2002, p.5). Functionings are the valuable activities which develop people’s well-being - for example being well educated, being in good health and participating in community life, in other words, ‘the various things a person may value doing or being’ (Sen, 1999, p.75). On the other hand, capability refers to ‘a person or group’s *freedom to* promote or achieve valuable functionings’ (Alkire, 2005, p.121); it refers to the various combinations of functioning which people value and are capable of achieving and it is reflected in a ‘person’s freedom to lead any type of life or another...to choose from possible livings’ (Alkire, 2002, p.6; Sen, 1992, p.40). However, the capability of the individual to convert the vector of functionings (goods and commodities) to one which he/she values is influenced by three groups of ‘*conversion factors*’:

First, *personal conversion factors* (such as metabolism, physical condition, sex, reading skills, intelligence)...Second, *social conversion factors* (such as public policies, social norms, discriminating practices, gender roles, societal hierarchies, power relations) and third, *environmental conversion factors* (such as climate, geographical location) (Robeyns, 2005, p.99).

These conversion factors enable or disable a person's capability to do and to be; for example, the participation of an individual in the decision making process can be enabled or disabled by a *personal conversion factor* if he/she is unable to read, or the participation of an individual can be achieved or limited by a *social conversion factor* if unequal power relations exist at a local level and thus limit his/her participation. This is explained by the fact that the capability approach acknowledges the external environment and is sensitive to the condition in which an individual life (Robeyns, 2005). All individuals live in a heterogeneous society (such as different ethnicities, religions, cultures and power relations), so their capability is shaped by social structures 'whether for valuable or undesirable capabilities' (Stewart, 2005, p.199).

Sen (2001) stated that social structure and people's capability are actually interdependent and mutually reinforcing and that if this is not taken into consideration, instead of enhancing the freedom and increasing the capabilities of local villagers, the social structure can limit the process of freedom (Sen, 2002; 2005), for example, unequal capabilities within a group can render the whole group unstable and have a negative effect on its members' well-being (Stewart, 2005, p.199). Dreze and Sen (2002, p.6) therefore emphasised the importance of social structure in the capability approach

It is essentially a 'people-centered' approach, which puts human agency (rather than organizations such as markets or governments) at the centre of the stage. The crucial role of social opportunities is to expand the realm of human agency and freedom, both as an end in itself and as a means of further expansion of freedom...We shall be particularly concerned with those opportunities that are strongly influenced by social circumstances and public policy (Robeyns, 2005, p.108)

The concentration of the capability approach on social values as a form of capability expansion enables us to understand empowerment or disempowerment. For example, Chambers (2006, p.108) argued that 'much of the material well-being of those who are 'better-off' is based on the ill-being of others'. This means that using the capability approach enables an understanding of the exploitative relations between an individual and the existing social structure because any capability can have an effect, and this includes the capability to misuse power or to cause harm to others by over-consumption (Robeyns, 2005, p.106). So in a social context where the 'upper' (government officials, political leaders, NGOs) who are superior to the 'lower' (local villagers) (Chambers, 2006, p.99) can enable or disable the empowerment of people, it is because the 'upper' might 'treat the surrounding persons as objects of freedom - capabilities - or as conversion factors' (Poolman, 2012, p.376). For example, Michener (1998, p.2115) stated that most of the time the public officials were 'sceptical of the feasibility of empowerment-level participation'. In turn, the influence of power relations and social context in which the programmes or projects are delivered to the people contributes to the failure of various development programmes (Luttrell *et al.*, 2009; Oxaal and Baden, 1997). That is to say, the capability of people not only depends on their ability to function, but also on the social and relational components within the society (Smith and Seward, 2009) and it is 'a blend of structural, social and individual capacities to act' (Naz, 2020, p.322).

As well as capability approach, it is important to emphasize here that the discourse on social relations was originated from the prominent social quality approach. This approach explains that the quality of social relations empowered people to make better decision in their life and consequently increase people's choice (Walker and Van der Maesen, 2004). It focuses on the extent to which society enables people to be empowered rather than an individual focused approach. It describes empowerment as the extent to which people's individual capabilities and their ability to act are improved by social relations (Herrmann, 2012, p.202) (see further Van der Maesen and Walker, 2012; Walker and Van der Maesen, 2004). Similarly, Sen (1980) took into

consideration the social relations which influence people's capabilities and capacities because they are constructed from the acts of individuals (Herrmann, 2012). It is in this context that the typologies of participation are insufficient to account for social structure and explain the lack of public participation in decision making process. This means that the participation and empowerment of people can be enabled or disabled by the social structure. As such, both social quality and capability approaches help to identify social and economic factors as a precondition for real participation and thus empowerment. Indeed both approaches have enabled this current study to understand the contributory factors which enable/disable participation, power and the empowerment of local people in decision making in rural development.

People's personal needs which are supported through their social networks and social relations are the primary concern of this current study. For instance, Kramm (2019, p.184) stated that the 'personal, environmental, social and relational factors' which determine the extent to which primary goods are transformed into the ability to achieve goals have played a crucial role in improving people's capability. Likewise Middlemiss *et al.* (2019) found that people's ability to handle energy poverty was affected by the quality of their social relations. For instance, among the social factors which have hindered people's capabilities are limited access to resources and opportunities, cultural issues and a lack of support structures, and most importantly the domination of power by local elites. In their findings on the sustainability of development initiatives, Szekely and Mason (2019, p.683) found that 'the destinies of elites are inseparable from those of the poor' and that this has influenced the capability of people to develop themselves, especially in education. This has also been evidenced in community-driven projects in both the Philippines and Pakistan, where factors such as the domination of power by a local elite exist at the local level and have limited the capability of people to participate and thus failed to translate it into empowerment (Ahmad and Abu Talib, 2015; Saguin, 2018). The domination of power within the social structure has contributed to the failure of people to participate, to gather and

process information and also to acknowledge other people's opinions (Wahid *et al.*, 2017). Steiner and Farmer (2018, p.132) stated that in order to successfully empower local people, it is important to 'create appropriate support structures that enable the transfer of power' and that the government must remove the barriers to participation and empowerment which exist in social structures. That is because the freedom and empowerment are 'determined by the social structures they are a part of' (Arambala, 2020, p.8)

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the highly contested nature of both participation and power. The highly complex understanding of participation has drawn several attempts to measure levels of participation through several typologies. These ranged from good to bad, instrumental to substantive participation and passive to active participation. Nevertheless, these typologies were criticised because of their failure to understand power relations issues and the fact that they neglected the social structure, which cannot be explained through typologies of participation. It was in this context that the dynamics of social structure and power relations were discussed in order to provide an understanding of the lack of public participation in rural development programmes. In turn, it was revealed that the concept of power was found to be important for understanding public participation in decision making.

The discussion turned to the concepts of power and empowerment. The concept of power was defined from several pluralist perspectives. This began from 'power over' and moved to alternative views of power. The arguments were made through the discussion of the three facets of power proposed by Lukes (1974, 2005), starting from the concept of power suggested by Dahl (1957, 1961) and followed by that of Bachrach and Baratz (1962, 1970). All of them argued that the concept of power was associated with power over others. Their arguments were then contrasted with the alternative views of power put forward by Arendt (1986) and Freire (1970), who argued that power cannot be associated with 'power over', but it can be described as 'power to', which

ignores the association of power with violence. Freire (1970), on the other hand, emphasised the importance of education as a tool for liberalisation and for making the oppressed 'conscious' of freedom and able to avoid being subjected by oppressors; in other words, power through education.

The discussion of the concept of power continued in the context of development which was discussed in terms of Sen's (1980) capability approach to the empowerment of people in their own development. The arguments were developed from the concept of power and empowerment proposed by Arendt (1986), Freire (1970) and Sen (1980), who focused not only on the individual but also on the social context. Public participation in the decision making process was the outcome of several contributory factors related to the social relational components and power within a society. Hence, this thesis focuses on how power and social structures enable or disable people to participate in their own development and consequently empower them to make decisions. The next chapter will discuss development policies and rural development in Malaysia.

Chapter 5

Rural Development in Malaysia

Introduction

This chapter proceeds as follows. First, there is a descriptive overview of national development policies since Malaysia gained independence. A discussion of rural development in Malaysia follows, describing the history of rural development strategies and programmes underpinning rural development in Malaysia, such as the new economic policy, the national development policy and the national vision policy. Third, there is an examination of the agenda of rural development specifically focusing on the GDW Programme. Finally there is a discussion of the background of the GDW and its implementation on the ground.

Malaysia, then Malaya, gained independence from the British in 1957. It now practises constitutional democracy. The highest law in the country is the Federal Constitution of Malaysia which established the principles that need to be followed by the government and the governed. It outlines the power of the Executive and Legislative branches of the government which practise fusion of power (they are intermingled) and the power of the Judiciary branch is independent from the other two. The head of state in Malaysia is Yang di-Pertuan Agong (YDPA) and the head of the government is the Prime Minister. Malaysia has thirteen independent states (eleven from Peninsular Malaysia and two from East Malaysia) with three Federal Territories, namely the Federal Territory of Putrajaya, the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and the Federal Territory of Labuan (Figure 5.1). Islam is the religion of the Federation but other religions may be practised in peace and harmony (The Federal Constitution of Malaysia, 2010). In 2020, the total population was estimated at 32.7 million people. Malaysia comprises a multi-ethnic society in which the

majority of population are Malays (69.6%), followed by Chinese (22.6%) and Indians (6.8%) and then Others (1.0%). The annual growth rate of the population in 2020 was estimated at 0.4% (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2020).

In economic terms, Malaysia registered GDP growth of 4.5% for the first quarter of 2019. The main catalysts for economic growth in Malaysia are the service, agriculture and manufacturing sectors, which registered growth of 6.4%, 5.6% and 4.2% respectively (based on 2019) (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2019).



Figure 5.1: The Peninsular and East Malaysia

Malaysia has formulated various development policies since 1950. These have ranged from the core national policies covering long-, medium- and short-term planning with a few special development plans. Long-term planning has covered three important Outline Perspective Plans (OPPs); the First Outline Perspective (1970-1990), the Second Outline Perspective Plan (1991-2000), and the Third Outline Perspective Plan (2001-2010) and one Vision 2020 policy (1991-2020). Each plan consists of major policies such as the new economic policy (NEP), the national development policy (NDP) and the national vision policy (NVP) which were designed to guide the planning of national development to achieve vision 2020 (as a developed country). Medium-term

planning consists of five-year development plans and mid-term reviews of the five years plans which began after independence. Short-term planning is made by the annual development budget produced by the Ministry of Finance. These national policies were developed and adjusted according to the current political and economic environment of the country, for instance, the NEP was introduced as a measure to address ethnic tension in May 1969 (details in the following section).

Overview of rural development in Malaysia

Due to the factors such as extreme poverty, unproductiveness, poor basic facilities and health, rural areas have consistently been the centre of development. Prior to 1971 the development in Malaysia had been focused on rising productivity only. The main aim of government's development was to develop urban areas in order to expedite economic growth. The government believed that the development in urban areas could 'trickle-down' to the rural areas (Government of Malaysia, 1976; The Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF), 1997). Within the period of 'trickle-down', government policies were developed to expedite the economic growth by supporting the industrialisation process through financial liberalisation and modernisation. Only after 1971, the interest in rural development particularly for poverty eradication emerged. Thus, various rural development strategies and plans were developed to complement the federal policies initiated by the government since independence. Ngah *et al.* (2010) identified several policies which were developed mainly for rural areas, such as the national agricultural policy (NAP), the national forestry policy (NFP) and the rural development master plan (PLIB).

A history of rural development strategies and programmes

The development of rural areas started in 1948 and was explicitly written into the Draft Development Plan (1950-1955) which focused on social and economic development. In line with that plan, the Rural and Development Authority (RIDA) was established to manage rural development because the government

realised that ‘the producers in the rural areas should enjoy a greater share of the proceeds of their labour than they obtain at present’ (Government of Malaysia, 1950, p.i). RIDA, as the catalyst for rural development, focused on building basic infrastructures and the modernisation of agriculture and at the same time on increasing the productivity of primary commodities such as rubber and tin, based on the market-based economy (a *laissez-faire* policy). However, although the government had focused on developing rural areas for rapid economic growth, it had neglected the issue of poverty eradication within those areas, especially among farmers and fishermen (The OECF, 1997).

Despite pointing to structural defects as one of the reasons for the backwardness and poverty of rural areas, in the case of Malaya, during the colonial period, the British had practised a ‘divide and rule’ system in which the main ethnicities, Malays, Chinese and Indians, were segregated on the basis of their living and working places. This system was introduced in order to ease colonial administration and to control economic and political needs. As a consequence of that policy, the segregation of places due to that system can be found from the population censuses and also from their occupations; for example, in 1947, the populations of the three major ethnicities in urban areas were uneven, with 11% ethnic Malays, ethnic Chinese at 43%, Indian and Pakistani people at 34% and the other 2% was unclear (Hopkins, 1955, p.12) (Table 5.1).

The conditions of people in Malaya worsened in the aftermath of the Second World War and during the war against communist insurgents in 1948 (Hack, 2009; Ladwig III, 2007; Thomas, 1977). The communist insurgents inflicted terrible violence: ‘planters and others were murdered, villagers were terrorised, rubber trees were slashed and transport lines and supply stock were raided’ (Hopkins, 1955, p.17). These circumstances led to an increase in the financial expenditure of the government in order to maintain security, especially in the areas of agricultural estates. Kheng (2009, p.136) claimed that the insurgency affected people’s social lives as well as politics.

Table 5.1: The Percentages of the Occupations of the various Ethnicities in Malaya

	Malaysians	Chinese	Indians, Pakistanis and others
Agriculture			
Rubber cultivation	20.0	23.4	47.1
Paddy cultivation	48.4	6.2	2.7
Other agricultural occupations	6.7	16.8	8.0
	75.1	46.4	57.8
Fishing	4.8	2.5	0.2
Mining and quarrying	0.5	4.3	1.4
Manufacturing etc	5.1	12.9	4.0
Transport and communication	3.0	3.3	5.6
Commercial and financial	3.0	14.4	7.3
Public administration and defense	1.8	0.1	1.4
(not otherwise classified)			
Professional occupations	1.6	1.8	2.7
Personal service	1.1	7.5	5.6
Clerical, etc, occupations	0.8	2.9	2.7
Other and indeterminate occupations	3.2	3.9	11.3
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Hopkins, 1955, p.12

The effort to develop rural areas was also obvious from the establishment of what was then the Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) in 1959, which was led by the then Deputy Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak, who introduced the Rural Economic Development (RED) book programme for rural development. This RED book was introduced to smooth administration at the national, state and district levels and also in the implementation of infrastructure development. The RED book was used to record the operations and progress of projects at the district level because it contained all the necessary information in the form of maps which showed the land use, projects, physical layout and transportation network (Shamsul, 1988). More importantly, the introduction of the RED book contributed to the emergence of a fourth level of administration at village level, known as the then Village Development Committee (VDC). This committee was established as a communication

channel for administration at village level. The institutionalisation of VDC was made as one of the mechanisms used by the central government to mobilise local people in an effort for their economic and social development. The functions of VDC were claimed not effective during that period because their petitions (the document that consist of the needs of the villagers) need to be screened by the Assistant District Officer (ADO) who was then wrote to the relevant agencies of government asking for budget allocation. Then, the Assistant District Officer (ADO) was carefully allotted the limited budget given ensuring all areas received something once in a while.

Nevertheless, in many government's big projects (such as building bridges, schools, clinics) where each of the government agencies had already planned, the petitions from the VDC were usually ignored. Not only the petitions by the VDC were ignored, the functions of VDC were also criticised due to the ineffective leadership (mainly because the VDC were appointed and their names were recommended by the local politicians - cronies of local politicians). Some was also claimed that, the VDC act as 'ears and eyes' for the government at local level, and any activities of the villagers which were not in accordance with the government political agenda will be reported (Shamsul, 1988).

After the formation of Malaysia in 1963, the government continued the development policy by introducing the First Five-Year Malaysia Plan (1966-1970). During this period, the objective of the policy was to eradicate economic and social problems which were hindering the high standard of living and social harmony of the multi-ethnic society. Several strategies were developed by identifying the socio-economic problems at that time, such as a heavy dependence on two export products (rubber and tin), the increase in the population, the uneven distribution of income, and the low level of human resource development (Government of Malaysia, 1966, p.1). In rural areas, the government spent \$1,000 million on agricultural and rural development projects intended to give rural communities a direct benefit by raising their productivity and consequently their income, and expenditure in other areas

was also intended to have a positive effect on rural development (Government of Malaysia, 1966, p.10). There was rapid economic growth after independence until 1990 and the real GDP increased sevenfold with 6.8% annual growth rate (Salleh and Meyanathan, 1993, p.ix).

However, the lack of any policy on rural poverty caused the deterioration of the socio-economic conditions especially among ethnic Malays who lived in rural areas and, together with the political tension between UMNO and MCA, led to the Sino-Malay ethnic riots in 1969. These ethnic riots were believed to have been the result of the high poverty level among the Malays and the claimed bias by public officials towards the Chinese; on the one hand, Malays believed that the underdevelopment of their economy was due to the Chinese economic hegemony even though at that time the Malaysian economy was still dominated by British investors, and on the other hand, non-Malays (especially the Chinese) believed that the government, which was led by the Malay dominated party, the UMNO (whose public officials were in the majority Malays) was responsible for discrimination towards the ethnic Chinese. They claimed that only specific groups of people such as Chinese capitalists and the Malay administrative-political elite had benefited most from the rapid economic growth in the 1960s (Jomo, 2004, p.2; Comber, 1978, p.94). After the bloody riots, the new economic policy (NEP) (1970-1990) was introduced by the then prime minister, Tun Abdul Razak, as a mechanism to eradicate poverty and restructure society.

New Economic Policy (NEP), 1970-1990

The NEP was announced by the second prime minister Tun Abdul Razak in 1971. There were two main aims of the policy; poverty eradication and restructuring society (EPU, 2004). First, a poverty eradication programme was formulated to correct economic imbalances between ethnics due to the divide and rule policy established by the colonial. Several strategies were developed to increase the incomes of poor people and however, at most extreme, this policy was claimed to favour Bumiputera (the sons of soil) and limit non-Bumiputera

because many poverty programmes and strategies were developed at rural areas (where majority were Malays or Bumiputera). Second, the objective of restructuring society is focusing to eradicate the recognition of race with economic activity, mainly to generate, enlarge and integrate the Malay capitalist and middle class (Jomo, 2004, p.9) which actually aim to expand *bumiputera* resources holding and ethnic segments in the more interesting - specifically white-collar - professions (Jomo *et al.*, 1995). In rural areas, these two objectives were materialised through income generation of rural poor by increasing productivity in agricultural sectors.

The NEP was claimed as the starting point of growing state intervention, especially in the economy which had formerly practised a *laissez-faire* approach (Jomo, 2004). *Laissez-faire* was blamed for the increase in the inequality and poverty which had indirectly contributed to the ethnic riots in 1969. So the government introduced the NEP to eradicate poverty and restructure society irrespective of race. This was the starting point for state intervention in the economy through direct control over 'resource allocation, production and trade, primarily through public enterprises' (Salleh and Meyanathan, 1993, p.5).

The greater emphasis of this policy was on rapid growth in the modern sector, such as industry and services, and consequently resulted in further reductions in agricultural employment (Young *et al.*, 1980). This trend was subsequently similar to the international development at that time in the belief that the rapid economic growth would trickle-down to the rural areas. Although industrial employment was believed to reduce rural poverty by absorbing people from rural areas, poverty was still high in rural areas because of the rural phenomenon. Table 5.2 shows the incidence of poverty in urban and rural areas and shows the reduction since 1970. In the official documents, the government's target was to reduce the poverty level from 49% in 1969 (in Peninsular Malaysia) to 16% by 1990 (Jomo, 2004). The limited understanding of poverty revealed in the NEP however was criticised for its potential to maintain the existing patronage exercised by the ruling political coalition to

the advantage of particular rural interest groups rather than to reduce poverty (Jomo, 2004, pp.7-8).

Under the NEP, several rural development strategies were developed and implemented, such as new land development, regional development and integrated rural development, with the purpose of the diversification of agriculture and the intensive use of natural resources (Arshad and Shamsudin, 1997; Ngah *et al.*, 2010; Salleh and Meyanathan, 1993). These strategies were believed to be important approaches to poverty eradication and for restructuring society in rural areas. They were, however, criticised because the effort towards poverty reduction was associated with increasing income and productivity, and not specifically targeting the poor (Jomo, 2004).

Table 5.2: Incidence of Poverty in Peninsular Malaysia, 1970s and 1980s

Sector	1970		1976		1984		1987		(%)
	Total poor household	Incidence of Poverty (%)	Total poor household	Incidence of Poverty (%)	Total poor household	Incidence of Poverty (%)	Total poor household	Incidence of Poverty (%)	
RURAL	70.9	58.7	666.9	47.8	402.0	24.7	408.2	22.4	19.3
Rubber smallholders	226.4	64.7	73.8	58.2	67.3	43.4	83.1	40.0	24.0
Paddy farmers	123.4	88.1	150.9	80.3	67.3	57.7	54.4	50.2	30.0
Estate workers	59.4	40.0	-	-	16.0	19.7	11.7	15.0	29.0
Fishermen	28.1	76.2	17.6	62.7	9.5	27.2	10.7	24.5	39.0
Coconut smallholder	16.9	52.9	12.4	64.0	6.6	46.9	4.9	39.2	27.0
Other Agriculture	128.2	89.9	274.4	52.1	158.8	10.0	-	-	-
Other Industries	123.5	35.2	139.5	27.3	76.5	10.0	-	-	-
URBAN	85.9	21.3	94.9	17.9	81.3	8.2	81.3	8.2	7.3

Source: Government of Malaysia, Malaysia Development Plan, various issues

National Development Policy (NDP), 1991-2000

The second major development policy in Malaysia was introduced in 1991 and was known as the national development policy (NDP); it included in its long-term plan the second outline perspective plan (OPP2) within the sixth and seventh Malaysia Plans. The specific goal of the NDP was to achieve *balanced development* but it still retained the same aims as the NEP: eradicating poverty and restructuring society. In particular, the NDP emphasised *growth with equity* by building on the impetus of the NEP; first, to focus on and

eradicate hard-core poverty; second, to develop a *Bumiputera* Commercial and Industrial Community (BCIC); third, to encourage the active participation of the private sector; and fourth, to establish a greater focus on human resources development and balanced development in urban and rural areas (EPU, 2004). Overall, the shift from NEP to NDP was intended to increase its effectiveness in terms of poverty reduction and restructuring society (EPU, 2004).

In regard to the reduction of poverty, especially in rural areas, anti-poverty programmes in the NDP focused on specific segments of poor people; the hard-core poor (or households with incomes at 50% of the Poverty Line Income or less). This consideration was made 'to ensure that the lower income households, who were no longer absolutely poor, will not experience a deteriorating socio-economic position and that their mean income relative to that of the higher income households will continue to improve' (Government of Malaysia, 1991). Therefore, the focus on poverty reduction was based only on specific segments of the population. Following that, several activities were introduced to support the strategy, such as a development programme for the hard-core poor (*Projek Perumahan Rakyat Termiskin - PPRT*) providing decent shelters and education; government support for NGOs through the Ikhtiar Loan Scheme for the poor; further continuing support for the agricultural sector through the IADP; and the eradication of poverty through several programmes such as promoting industrialisation and commercialisation in the rural areas.

The introduction of the NDP not only produced a focus on *growth with equity* but also sought to obtain developed country status by 2020, as was announced by the then prime minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in 1991. As a consequence of that, specific rural development strategies were developed in line with the new vision of the country. A New Philosophy and Strategy of Rural Development (NPSRD) was introduced in 1994 to realign the focus of rural development from building infrastructure (eco-centric) to human development (homo-centric). Therefore, rural development had to undertake seven main initiatives formulated by the NPSRD (INFRA, 1997a):

- To develop excellence in the individual;
- To strengthen the family unit as an instrument of prosperity and well-being;
- To build a self-confident and resourceful society;
- To build a high-quality infrastructure;
- To develop a sustainable economy;
- To develop an effective delivery system; and
- To create an institutional framework responsive to change.

In order to implement this initiative, the then MRD established the Visionary Village Movement and then renamed it to the Visionary Capability Movement (GDW) Programme to encourage public participation in planning and implementing development projects which could enhance and improve their lives in terms of the seven initiatives outlined in the NPSRD (details are given below).

National Vision Policy (NVP), 2001-2010

The third and the major development policy in Malaysia which set it on course to achieve developed country status by 2020 was Vision 2020 which sought to achieve sustainable growth and to strengthen economic resilience. This policy was a continuation of the two previous policies, but its core component was to establish a united Malaysian nation which is resilient and capable of facing the challenges. The NVP covered the period 2001-2010 and its main focus was to build a resilient and competitive nation in terms of economic factors such as globalisation and liberalisation. Therefore, through the mid-term review of the five-year plan, the government made a concerted effort to focus on knowledge-based economy in line with the vision to achieve developed nation status because the economy was focused on production factors such as land, resources and capital and was not sustainable (Government of Malaysia, 2001). This was because, in order to compete in the global economy, the need to be competitive and more importantly to re-focus on producing, acquiring, utilising and disseminating knowledge (Government of Malaysia, 2001) to increase value-added to the current products, were really pivotal factors. With the change of prime minister in 2003, the new incumbent, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, put more emphasis on a knowledge-based economy for rapid economic

growth while still maintaining many of components of the NEP and the NDP. This policy focused on total development and envisaged that

By the year 2020, Malaysia can be a united nation, with a confident Malaysian society, infused by strong moral and ethical values, living in a society that is democratic, liberal and tolerant, caring, economically just and equitable, progressive and prosperous and in full possession of an economy that is competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient (Government of Malaysia, 1991, p.5)

In this policy, socio-economic development would continue to be a priority in enhancing the quality of life of Malaysians. In particular, it would continuously focus on national unity as its overriding objective along with economic growth to eradicate poverty and to restructure society (Government of Malaysia, 2001). Not only that, the private sector would become the main actor to spearhead economic growth and the public sector would become a supporting actor or facilitator by providing a supportive environment to achieve the socio-economic objectives. That is, the NVP relied on 'export-led growth, direct foreign investment, privatisation, deregulation, and promotion of small-scale industries' (Jomo *et al.*, 1995, p.33) and politically focused on national unity at the same time. This strategy was in line with the neo-liberal objectives discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Along with the vision, seven key priorities were developed (Government of Malaysia, 2001, pp.7-8):

- Building a resilient nation;
- Promoting equitable growth;
- Sustaining high economic growth;
- Enhancing competitiveness;
- Developing a knowledge-based economy;
- Strengthening human resource development; and
- Pursuing environmentally sustainable development.

In terms of its achievement, technically the incidence of poverty and growth of mean monthly gross household income were considered to have made some progress. However, poverty was still high in rural areas and mean monthly household income for rural areas increased only slightly, as Tables 5.3 and 5.4 show. Despite the reduction in the incidence of poverty and increases in

income, the income disparity between rural and urban areas of the country still remains wide (Chamhuri *et al.*, 2016).

Table 5.3: Incidence of Poverty by Ethnicity and Strata, Malaysia, 1970-2009

	1970	1976	1979	1984	1987	1989	1992	1995	1997	1999	2002	2004	2007	2009
Malaysia	49.3	37.7	37.4	20.7	19.4	16.5	12.4	8.7	6.1	8.5	6	5.7	3.6	3.8
Ethnic														
<i>Bumiputera</i>	64.8	46.4	49.2	28.7	26.6	23	17.5	12.2	9	12.3	9	8.3	5.1	5.3
Chinese	26	17.4	16.5	7.8	7	5.4	3.2	2.1	1.1	1.2	1	0.6	0.6	0.6
Indians	39.2	27.3	19.8	10.1	9.6	7.6	4.5	2.6	1.3	3.4	2.7	2.9	2.9	2.5
Others	44.8	33.8	28.9	18.8	20.3	22.8	21.7	22.5	13	25.5	8.5	6.9	6.9	6.7

Source: Economic Planning Unit, 2016

Table 5.4: Mean Monthly Gross Household Income by Ethnicity and Strata, Malaysia, 1970-2009 (RM)

Ethnic Group	1970	1973	1976	1979	1984	1987	1990	1995	1999	2002	2004	2007	2009
Bumiputera	276	335	380	475	616	614	940	1600	1984	2376	2711	3156	3624
Chinese	632	739	866	906	1086	1012	1631	2895	3456	4279	4437	4853	5001
Indians	478	565	592	730	791	771	1209	2153	2702	3044	3456	3799	3986
Others	1304	1789	1395	1816	1775	2043	955	1274	1371	2165	2312	3651	3640
MALAYSIA	423	502	566	669	792	760	1167	2007	2472	3011	3249	3686	4204
Urban	687	789	913	942	1114	1039	1617	2596	3103	3652	3956	4356	4705
Rural	321	374	431	531	596	604	951	1300	1718	1729	1875	2283	2545

Source: Economic Planning Unit, 2016

In 2010, the rural development master plan (PILB) was introduced to revitalise rural areas by incorporating the new philosophy and strategy of rural development (NPSRD) which had been introduced in 1994. The main vision of the PILB was to develop rural areas to be economically competitive, and to develop socially harmony and sustainable development in parallel with the national vision of becoming a developed country by 2020. There were four missions to be accomplished; developing human capital, increasing economic opportunities, improving the quality of life in rural areas and integrating the management of rural areas. In 2018, a new government of Malaysia (formed after the 14th Malaysian General Election) has argued that the aim to be a developed nation status through the national vision policy will not be achieved due to the failure of the then government (Hiu, 2018). As such, new strategies

and thrusts have been developed by the new government that stresses on ‘building the nation to fulfil the hopes of the *rakyat* or citizen’ (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2018, p.vi). Even so, the former economic and development policies of the then government are still being implemented and nothing much has changed.

The Visionary Capability Movement Programme or Gerakan Daya Wawasan (GDW)

The National Development Policy (NDP) was introduced in 1991 to continuously focus on national unity as its overriding objective along with economic growth to eradicate poverty and to restructure society. With that aim, the then Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) developed several economic plans to fight poverty. One of the economic and development plans which was developed in 1996 and still carry on today is the GDW Programme (as at May 2018) and covered 15,552 villages (as of 2014) throughout Malaysia. Its principal purpose is to ease the public to participate in bringing about changes to expand the living conditions and a faster economic growth in the rural areas in Malaysia by utilising the existing economic potential and new resources within their villages (CDD, 2014). The then Minister of MRD believed that ‘the transformation of rural areas to become attractive, progressive, and profitable will not occur if the village people are not dynamic, creative and ‘participative’’ (INFRA, 1995). In particular,

This is the active involvement of the rural community itself in the development process. Action must originate at the grass roots level, so that in any given area the local community initiates change and determines the form and direction of development of their village. The programme and activities of the Rural Vision Movement (as it is officially known by the government) are to be shaped by seven initiatives aimed at fulfilling seven preconditions set out in the New Philosophy and Strategy of Rural Development (INFRA, 1997b)

In order to achieve the vision of the GDW Programme, the then MRD outlined seven objectives:

- To develop a spirit of self-reliance and to eliminate the mental attitude that always expects subsidies;
- To draw the local residents into active involvement in rural development;
- To instil optimism about the inherent abilities of village people, which will give rise to a brighter, more accomplished new generation;
- To change the traditional model of land ownership to facilitate the consolidation of fragmented small-holdings;
- To improve the capabilities of people in the rural areas in order to achieve the goals for this sector which form part of Vision 2020;
- To increase empowerment skills; and
- To train the members of Village Development and Security Committees (VDSCs), so that they can prepare and execute village action plans effectively.

The Institute for Rural Advancement (INFRA) was charged with creating a training module to train rural people, especially local leaders. The training module was focused on the changing paradigm for villages to be managed by local leaders. By 2000, almost 3,000 villages (642 each year) had been selected and were given attention and support to encourage their potential for further development. The selection was based on villages which had better physical infrastructures, such as roads, electricity and water supplies. Even so, the selected villages did not perform very well and still depended on government assistance. The remaining villages failed to develop and many of them still suffer poor conditions due to the lack of knowledge and skills of local people to develop the programme (Prime Minister's Speech, 2003).

In 2003, under the prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, the GDW Programme was revitalised in line with the Eighth Mid-term Review of the Malaysia Plan (2001-2005) and after the Asian Financial Crises (AFC) of 1997-1998. With the challenging effects of the global economy such as globalisation and liberalisation, the government prepared for rural areas to become resilient and to survive the challenges. Among other important aims were the intentions to increase rural people involvement in decision making process. This change in direction was also in line with the dominance of the neo-liberal

approach to global development (Chapters 1 and 3). This was embedded in the Eighth Mid-term review of the Malaysia Plan (2001-2003) (EPU, 2001, p.401):

The new rural development strategy, *Gerakan Daya Wawasan* (GDW), gave emphasis to human development and the empowerment of community leaders and the rural population. In line with the strategy, efforts were directed at enhancing the capability and capacity of the rural populace to be involved in the decision-making process to improve and upgrade their standards of living and quality of life.

The GDW Programme emphasised the intention to empower rural residents to achieve change and more rapid development (CDD, 2014) through the implementation of public participation in the decision making process. The GDW villages were believed to be developed, appealing and profitable in line with the Vision 2020 target: developed, attractive and profitable. To realise this and to help local people to participate, the government provided advice in terms of skills and training in how to conduct meetings, assistance in the use of equipment, and the development of the ability to identify resources by working with government agencies such as the INFRA. Following that, the government, through INFRA, developed ICT centres in rural areas to give local people access to information communication and technology. In addition to these ICT centres, public involvement in decision making over economic and development activities could also be inculcated through interaction and deliberation during engagement in planning and managing resources and in local activities such as village meetings. Despite these changes, the implementation of the programme at village level did not go as expected because the villages involved in the programme were still underdeveloped and very low public participation (Parliament, House of Commons, 2006).

Moreover, Community Development Department (CDD) or *Jabatan Kemajuan Masyarakat* (KEMAS) is one of the crucial government agencies that is accountable to supervise the majority of GDW villages in Malaysia (CDD, 2014). Its main functions can be classified into four; rural development, human capital development, community education and children early education.

Under rural development programme, there are two divisions; the rural development division (social) and the entrepreneur division (economy). The main purpose of these two divisions is to improve the socio-economic status of villagers, towards creating successful villages with an identity. The GDW Programme has been placed under the rural development division (CDD, 2014). Under this division, several programmes and activities have been formulated such as: rural integration, capital, and graduate or *Integrasi Desa, Daya and Siswa* (iDEAS), village beautification programme, *program mesra rakyat*, independence programme, excellent village award, prosperous village programme and grading of the GDW village. One of the main activities under the rural development division is the rural village competition. This competition started in 1987 and its objectives changed according to the current rural development needs in line with the national development policies to achieve Vision 2020. For example the 1 Malaysia prosperous village award or *Anugerah Desa Sejahtera 1 Malaysia* (ADS1M) is one of the oldest programmes under the GDW since its introduction in 1987. In general terms, the purpose of the programme is to create progressive, attractive and profitable villages. At the same time, it evaluates the performance of the VDSC in managing the village. The MRRD has outlined seven criteria that local people need to implement under this programme (Table 5.5). It should be noted that the name of the competition has been changed three times indicating the different objectives and strategies which have been introduced to support the GDW, as Table 5.6 shows.

Table 5.5: Seven criteria for the implementation of ADS1M

Criterion	Explanation	Problem identified
1 Leadership	Networking of VDSC and local people with outsiders such as NGOs	Lack of skills and experiences of local people and the VDSC
2 Education: Level of achievement	Formal and non-formal education	Non-formal education still prominent in deprived states such as Kelantan, Sabah and Sarawak
3 Economy: business, industry and agriculture and fishery	Small industries which provide job opportunities and utilise resources such as idle land and rivers as sources of economy	Limited resources and no skills to develop new resources
4 Clean and healthy	Clean village and proper disposal areas	Social context such as history, culture and location of villages may hinder the implementation of these aspects
5 Cheerful and beautiful	Based on creativity in managing the landscape and decoration of the village	Lack of awareness and literacy among local people
6 Civic and spiritual development	Religious activities and seminars such as anti-drug campaigns	ICT illiteracy
7 Information and community technology (ICT)	Ability to utilise ICT in planning and managing programmes	

Source: Ministry of Rural and Regional Development, 2014

Table 5.6: Development of the 1 Malaysia Prosperous Village Award (ADS1M) programme

Name	Focus
1987 Health, Beauty and Village Development Competition or <i>PKKK</i>	The focus of the competition at that time was to encourage rural residents to beautify their villages and maintain cleanliness
2000 Excellent Village Competition or <i>PDC</i>	Emphasised the human capital aspect
2005 Excellent Village Award or <i>ADC</i>	Emphasised sustainability in rural development in parallel with Vision 2020 policy
2014 1 Malaysia Prosperous Village Award or <i>ADS1M</i>	To unite all Malaysians through the 1 Malaysia concept and to inculcate patriotism among Malaysians

Source: Ministry of Rural and Regional Development, 2014

In the early period of implementation of the programme the GDW villages were evaluated and graded by the MRRD every two years. There are six important criteria that have been developed by the MRRD as indicators for the excellent and the less excellent villages in achieving the goal of the programme. These cover all aspects of social and economic development (Table 5.7).

Table 5.7: Criteria for evaluating the GDW village

Criteria for evaluation	Explanation
1 Quality: Management and leadership	Networking of VDSC/VDSCP and local people with outsiders such as NGOs
2 Sustainability: Business and industry	Small industries which provide job opportunities
3 Prosperousness: Agriculture and fishery	Utilising resources such as idle land and rivers as sources of economy
4 Wholeness: Associations and institutional activities	Active associations and social activities
5 Cheerfulness: Clean, healthy and beautiful	Clean village and proper disposal areas
6 Skill: Mastery in information and community technology (ICT)	Ability to utilise ICT in planning and managing programmes

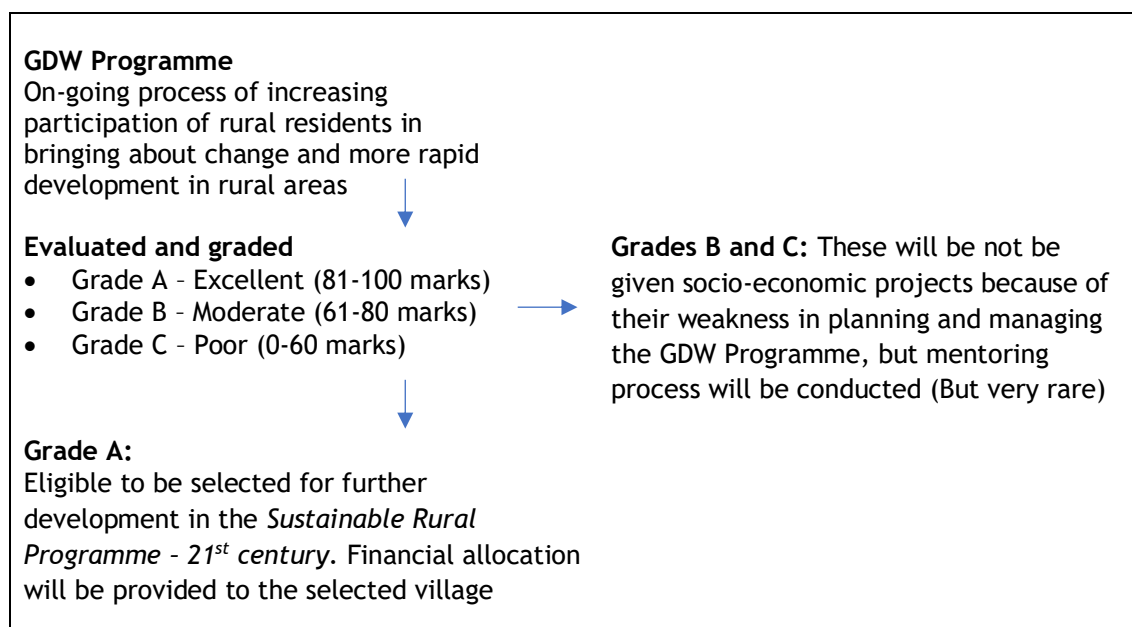
Source: Ministry of Rural and Regional Development, 2013

Indicators: Grade for villages are: Grade A - Excellent (81-100 marks), Grade B - Moderate (61-80 marks) and Grade C - Poor (0-60 marks)

Based on the assessment criteria provided by the MRRD, three groups of villages are produced: *excellent*, *moderate* and *poor* villages. Each village has to fulfil the six criteria shown in Table 5.7. Most importantly, the grade achieved results in different treatment by the government, and *poor* and *moderate* villages will be treated differently from the *excellent* villages. That is to say, for *poor* and *moderate* villages the government will not fund any socio-economic projects because of their weak performance in the GDW. *Excellent* villages, however, have opportunities to be selected for further socio-economic development such as in terms of financial support and equipment. They are also eligible to be selected for the *Sustainable Rural Programme - 21st century* (CDD, 2015) (Table 5.8). Thus each village in Malaysia has to implement several criteria that have been set by the MRRD as

a guideline for villages. These criteria include all social and economic development aspects that might help to enhance rural areas.

Table 5.8: Implications for villages of the evaluation process



After the fourteenth general election of Malaysia on 9 May 2018, the implementation of the GDW was halted and the new members of cabinet meeting have decided on 27 June 2018 to restructure the VDSC and rename the name of committee to the MPKK (the management of village community). As at June 2019, there was no further announcements made by the new Ministry of Rural Development (before May 2018 the ministry was known as the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development) as whether to continue or terminate the GDW.

Conclusion

The first section of this chapter provided an overview of national development policies in Malaysia. It discussed in very general terms the political, social and economic aspects of Malaysia. The national development policies in Malaysia were formulated covering the long-, medium- and short-term planning horizons with a few special development plans. These national policies were

developed and adjusted according to the current politics and economics of the country.

The second section provided an overview of rural development. First, the government developed several strategies to address the problems of poverty in rural areas based on the different periods of national development policies since Malaysia gained independence. Second, the discussion was narrowed to the history of rural development strategies and programmes. The discussion started with a description of national development plans before independence, during the Malaya period, post-independence, after the formation of Malaysia and after the ethnic riots of 1969. The development policies and plans followed the current economic model, such as *laissez-faire* or market-driven, state intervention and structural adjustment policies similar to the pattern in the global economy. Most importantly, Malaysia aimed to achieve developed country status by 2020. Therefore, several strategies and plans were formulated for strengthening the economy and at the same time maintaining national unity. Third, the discussion turned to the agenda of rural development; the GDW Programme. Following that, the discussion was mainly focused on the emergence of the GDW since its inception in 1996. It addressed the vision of the GDW, the responsible ministry and the agencies which are responsible for the implementation of the programme. The formulation and implementation of the GDW was in line with the national vision to be a developed country by 2020, and was specifically focused on making rural areas progressive, attractive and profitable. In 2003, the programme was revitalised under a new prime minister and focused more on human capital development through citizen participation and empowerment. Finally, discussion focused on the department and agencies responsible for the implementation of the GDW. Following that, the discussion was then focused on the evaluation of the programme and its implication after the evaluation. The next chapter will discuss the methodology and methods used for conducting this research study.

Chapter 6

Methodology and Methods

Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the framework of policy development and relates it with the philosophical foundations that underpin this research by analysing several key theories and concepts such as development, rural development, participation, power and empowerment. The chapter starts with a discussion of development frameworks in the context of Malaysia, and this is followed by an explanation of the methodology and the methods used in this study. The third and final section of this chapter discusses ethical considerations. The research was guided by four main questions. The first question is intended to understand policy development at a macro-level. The research examines the actors and formal and informal institutions which were responsible for the introduction of the GDW Programme:

1. Why was the Visionary Capability Movement (GDW) Programme introduced in Malaysia?

The second question focused on the implementation of the GDW by the responsible officers at the federal, state and local levels. It interrogated the understanding of these officers about the Programme and how they disseminated information to the local people,

2. How has the GDW Programme been implemented on the ground?

The third question investigated how local people perceived and understood the GDW and the concept of participation underlying this Programme,

3. How did local villagers understand the concept of participation in decision making?

The fourth question addressed the overall process of public participation in the GDW, from policy development at a macro-level, the meso-implementation level and the practice of participation at the micro-level,

4. How far did the GDW Programme succeed as a strategy to facilitate public participation in decision making?

The framework of policy development, its implementation and participation in Malaysia

The literatures on theories of development, rural development, participation and power (Chapters 2-4) introduced several theories and concepts which have influenced economic and development policies in many LDCs. The debates around these major theories have treated the issues of the development and participation of people only at the surface level by outlining several models and approaches which were believed to reduce poverty and enhance people's well-being. Most commonly, these models and approaches (Chapter 2) were developed at a macro level by development experts, IGOs and focused on understanding and measuring development and participation in economic terms. Therefore several economic and development strategies have been introduced based on growth and causal economic factors. The strategies were then implemented at the meso level by public officials, known as street-bureaucrats, through decentralisation process. Likewise, participation in decision making has been introduced as a means to provide opportunities for local villagers to decide their own economic and development affairs at the micro level. These economic and development strategies have consequently produced different policy outcomes. For example, the implementation of economic and development strategies which were introduced by IGOs were not all compatible with the circumstances of the LDCs (Chapters 2 and 3). At the meso level, the strategy to streamline the administration process such as

decentralisation was not effectively implemented (Chapter 3). At the micro level, the participation of villagers in the decision making process was limited by the power of local leaders created by the central actors (Chapter 4). Under these circumstances, we cannot fully understand the lack of public participation in decision making based on causal economic factors which underpin these complex interactions. Most of the economic and development models have ignored the important role of political economy and the integration between the political and economic perspectives in shaping policy development, its implementation and the practice of participation at the local level. This is especially relevant but has been downplayed in the context of Malaysia. It is important to note here that the use of political economy is not in competition with the other major developments and participation, rather it focuses on locating policy development and its implementation firmly in the context of Malaysia from the economic and political perspectives, which the two major development and participation perspectives have so far neglected. The decision to employ the political economy perspective in this study was made to enable us to understand the specific problem which this research is designed to address.

Before moving on to discuss in detail this perspective, it is necessary to examine other potential approaches to understanding participation in the economic and development process: rational choice theory and the socio-economic status (SES) model (Brady *et al.*, 1995; Leighley, 1995; Verba and Nie, 1972; Verba *et al.*, 1995). Rational choice theory originated from classical micro-economics and focused on individual choice under limited preferences, as such that individual was presumed to maximise their own utility. Ordeshook (1993, p.76) explained the theory as a combination of politics and economics within a common model. Unlike political economy, the rational choice theory presumes that an individual would maximise the benefits and fulfil the self-interest which he or she could gain from any political activity, and self-interest is used to explain what happens in politics when both politicians and the electorate each have a desire to serve their own interests (Green and Shapiro, 1994, pp.2-3). This means that an individual acting out of self-interest will

participate when the benefits to be gained from participation are higher than the cost. However, not all individuals prioritise self-interest and benefits in making decisions because 'people's preferences reflect their broader interests and commitments' (Hindmoor, 2010, p.53) and 'if a particular individual values expressing her opinions enough... participation is entirely rational' (Leighley, 1995, p.195). On the other hand, the SES model was developed to understand individual participation based on the notion that each person's social status as measured by education, job and income has a significant impact on the level of participation (Verba and Nie, 1972, p.13). According to this theory, the participation of an individual is driven by his/her resources such as income, education and occupation. For example, an individual with a high level of education will normally participate compared with an individual with a low level of education, and individuals with a high income are more likely to participate in politics than low-income earners (Leighley, 1995). The prominent literature suggested that 'studies consistently show that *higher class persons are more likely to participate in politics than lower class persons*' (Milbrath *et al.*, 1977, p.92), which means that someone with higher status is more likely to participate on the assumption that he/she has the skills to understand and take part in politics (Verba and Nie, 1972). However, this model fails to explain 'why large numbers of high-status individuals do not participate in politics' (Pattie *et al.*, 2004, p.145) because the 'SES model fails to specify clearly the *mechanism* linking social statuses to activity' (Brady *et al.*, 1995, p.272), and income, education and occupation are not the only factors which contribute to public participation, there are other reasons which cannot be quantified and easily measured through resources (discussed in greater detail in the next section).

The literature on development and participation (Chapters 2-4) showed the roles of the different key actors who have influenced decision making on economic and development policies. This has contributed to the complexity of understanding public participation in Malaysia's context where it has occurred at three different levels: macro (central), meso (state) and micro (village). In order to understand public participation in decision making, this research must

examine the understanding of the key actors at these three different levels. So an attempt to understand public participation must move beyond the mathematical modelling and linear equations which are commonly used in rational choice theory and the SES model even though it is a strength of both approaches. Strategic calculation should be resisted in understanding public participation because it must be understood from several possible elements which exist through the interaction of people in the decision making process. Instead of asking 'how might a rational choice theory explain X?' or 'can the SES model predict public participation', it is much better to ask 'what explains X?' (Green and Shapiro, 1994, p.203) or 'what explains participation'.

These show that this study has employed political economy as a methodology for analysing the ways in which policies can be influenced by the choices made between institutions (Besley and Coate, 2003, p.3). Specifically, it interrogates different key actors at different levels that help to determine the results of economic development policy and public participation programme in Malaysia. Both politics and economics are interrelated disciplines. Thus, political economy has been defined in comparison with mainstream economics as

...more concerned [than mainstream economics] with the relationships of the economic system and its institutions to the rest of society and development. It is sensitive to the influence of non-economic factors such as political and social institutions, morality and ideology in determining economic events. It thus has *much broader focus* than mainstream economics (Sackrey *et al.*, 2013, pp.3-4)

Under this assumption, it is imperative to understand the main actors, their connections and networks that may influence the development strategies and policies developed at a macro-level. In this study, the GDW Programme must be understood from a series of processes of development and the extent of participation which are discursively constructed by the agents; individuals, groups, families, government and NGOs and also the formal or informal institutions. As such, the discussion on public participation in decision making

in Malaysia cannot be limited to the individual level, but it must be looked into in terms of the ideas, norms and identity that are constructed by both individuals and society, at three different levels. These agents act on their beliefs and preferences which consequently construct the ideas of development and participation. In other words, development and participation are not processes without a subject, they are socially constructed by the 'subjects'; the actors. Furlong and Marsh (2010, p.190) argued that 'reality is socially constructed, but, while it is individuals who construct that world...their views are shaped by social, political and cultural processes', hence, a political economy perspective was seen as a suitable approach to examine this phenomenon.

Political economy is used to understand the 'reality' of development since it is very fluid and elusive, and this reality only exists when people claim that it exists (Abdelal, 2009). 'Reality' here refers to the social facts that it is the product of social processes, inter-subjective (belief shared among people) and institutionalised practices. Therefore, the reason behind the decisions made by the actors, who are an object of this study can only be interpreted through their meaningful social action. Thus, it is useful to ask 'how' or 'what' questions about the static properties that constitute things and does not try to find a causal explanation through 'why' questions (Parsons, 2010, p.86), or to 'establish [a] regular relationship between social phenomena; using theory to generate hypotheses' (Furlong and Marsh, 2010, p.194). Unlike political economy, both the rational choice theory and the SES model regard the world as composed of discrete elements with characteristics which are independent of the observer and the researcher (Furlong and Marsh, 2010, p.190). That means the reason for the public to participate was not socially constructed and it can be tested using the available established theory and 'it is formal, axiomatic, and deductive' (Pettracca, 1991, p.293). Instead of looking at social interaction of actors that shaped the economic and development policy and the understanding of public participation, both approaches focus more on 'testable hypotheses that, when tested, lead to valid causal inference' (Verba *et al.*, 2000, p.244) and in this case the established factors that have been

tested in other studies can be understood contribute to participation. For Green and Shapiro (1994, p.23) this was described as 'universalism and the search for equilibria'. For the proponents of rational choice theory and SES model, they were sceptical with the inductive approach of understanding public participation. For them, the 'deductive theoretical propositions are of interest' (Achen and Snidal, 1989, p.168) which may provide a convincing explanation of the problem. However, there have been several empirical cases which have shown that deductive theoretical propositions do not best explain the problem. Factors such as elite capture and the existence of power relations have resulted in the failure of many development and participatory programmes. For example, in terms of elite capture, Dasgupta and Beard (2007) found that the failure of a development programme in Indonesia was due to the existence of elite capture. Similarly, Platteau (2004) found that elite domination at the local level in West Africa contributed to the ineffectiveness of community-driven development. Narayanan (2003) found that the power structure played a major role in ensuring the effectiveness of a participatory programme in rural areas in India. These studies have shown that the failure of a development and participation programme might be due to several contributory factors which cannot simply be explained through rational choice theory and the SES model.

When applied in Malaysia's context, the aim of the political economy approach is to understand the entwined political and the economic perspectives of development and participation and how these perspectives combine to affect the participation of people in decision making in rural development programme. Decisions in these circumstances require further explanation from the political economy perspective because of the problems and the complexity which economic development involves.

First, at the macro level, political economy enables us to study actors that involved in policy development and examine their intentions, to explore the complexities of implementation at central, state and local levels, and to reveal the extent to which IGOs influence policy development in Malaysia, for

example the roles of the World Bank, the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund in Malaysia's policy making. These complexities have influenced the development process in Malaysia both directly and indirectly. For instance, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the failure of economic growth in many LDCs was claimed to have been due to heavy intervention by the state in regulating the market. In order to correct this problem, the IGOs recommended many LDCs to adopt neo-liberal macro-economic policies. The neo-liberal approach was believed to enable them to 'establish an efficient self-regulating market' (Khoo, 2010, p.3) and to limit Malaysia's government intervention. But after a decade, several national development programmes and projects specially intended to eradicate poverty and restructure society have been implemented and the outcomes are still varied and uncertain (Chapters 3 and 5) and more serious, poverty has actually worsened in some LDCs (Chapter 3). This situation shows the failure of 'the business as usual' - the institutional arrangements and the economic models - to provide an explanation and solution to the problem and the complexities of economic development in many LDCs in general and in Malaysia in particular.

The discussion above raises the question of whether development programmes framed at the central level, which are likely to be dominated by positivist and modern economists' thinking (such as rational choice theory and the SES model) can be implemented successfully at the local level. Have rural development programmes framed at the central level accommodated social relations and cultures in each local area? The argument of this study is therefore that it is important to show 'a process of social construction by which people arrive at their ideas, norms and identities' (Parsons, 2010, p.87). To illustrate, the GDW Programme was formulated and developed at the central level with the purpose is to ease the public to participate in bringing about changes to expand the living conditions and to promote more rapid development in the rural areas in Malaysia by utilising the existing economic potential and new resources within their villages (CDD, 2014). Nevertheless, after two decades of implementation, it has suffered from a lack of people's participation at village level. This situation has shown that the standard

economic models proposed at the macro level which are prominently used to understand participation are insufficient to explain the lack of public participation at the micro level. Therefore, by using the political economy perspective, this current study is designed to understand why and how specific development policies were chosen rather than other programmes, who was involved and who benefited, and what effects these policies had on the interests of local people. Specifically, this study seeks to answer why the GDW was introduced by the government.

Second, by using the political economy approach at the meso level instead of exploring the self-interest and the benefits which motivate people, the study explores the need for policy implementation to put policy into practice. Implementation can be defined as 'to carry out, accomplish, fulfil, produce, complete' authoritative public policy (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973, p.xiii). The study of policy implementation can be traced back to scholarly literature in the early 1970s (see Bardach, 1977; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973; Sabatier and Mazmanian, 1981; O'Toole, 1986; Winter, 1990). In the late 1980s, policy implementation faced challenges from the reform of public administration and the influence of neo-liberalism and as a result, several structural changes were proposed such as decentralisation, privatisation, and public and private partnership. The policy implementation process therefore involved a variety of actors such as individual citizens, street-level actors at state and local levels, NGOs and IGOs. The implementation problem which commonly occurred may have been due to this complex relationship between actors of policy implementation and the complex government structure. For example, when street-level bureaucrats have to answer to several stakeholders such as legislators, a governor and opinion leaders, Dewar (1998) claimed that these complex situations were among the factors which led to so little economic development in Minnesota's local economic programme in the United States. Even though a government has formulated a very good development policy, it might not be being implemented on the ground in the way that was expected. Moreover, Anderson (2011, p.211) found that the 'state and local economic conditions' are among the factors affecting implementation. Cherkaoui and Ali

(2007, p.760) similarly found that political issues such as the influence of political actors, inefficient administrators and the inefficiency of development policies had contributed to poor performance in Morocco.

From the above explanations, neither rational choice theory nor the SES model was considered appropriate for explaining how and why the problem of policy implementation affects public participation at village level. The assumptions of rational choice and the SES model (the natural scientists) typically relied on material facts or sufficient information to explain any outcomes. To illustrate, for the rational choice theorists, it is the self-interest and benefits gained by policy implementers which drive their actions at the meso level; 'egoistic individuals seeking to maximize their own well-being' (Pettracca, 1991, p.296). In this case, the policy implementer or the rational actor 'makes the best possible use of the available information' (Hindmoor, 2010, p.52) to satisfy their interests, but this process was hardly possible because the formulation and decision making of the GDW did not directly involve the policy implementers, and their access to the programme was limited. Similarly, the core idea of the SES model is that resources such as income, education and occupation are 'the product of social structures, inherited characteristics from parents and education' (Pattie *et al.*, 2004, p.145) so individuals with resources will participate, but this assumption was not relevant for application at the meso level. Rather than looking at resources, it was the roles of the street-level bureaucrats and the different cultural values and different political perspectives among them at the state and village levels which became the central question of why the GDW has not worked.

As such, the political economy perspective enabled this research to unveil the complex structure, the role of street-level bureaucrats, the discretionary power, norms, culture and the economic conditions faced by policy implementers that became conditions for effective policy implementation on the ground. Likewise, the economic development and rural development policies in Malaysia are formulated and influenced by a variety of actors, irrespective of who has direct power or indirect power, such as the prime

minister, ministers, public officials, interest groups, NGOs, citizens and, at the international level, IGOs. Specifically, in the context of the current study, there were two main groups of public officials who were directly involved in implementing the GDW Programme at Kedah state level; the officers from the Community Development Department (CDD) and the officers from the Kedah Regional Development Authority (KEDA). These actors were considered important because the CDD and the other agencies were assigned to implement the GDW, which covered 15,552 (as of 2014) villages throughout Malaysia. Thus, their roles, values, ideas and the understanding about the GDW are very important element in streamlining the implementation of the programme at local level. That means, there is a need to focus on several elements which is mediated by ideas, norms, and culture through social construction by examining the 'day-to-day operation' of the CDD and public agencies (Anderson, 2011, p.209), which cannot be explained from a deductive theory or an assumption about what motivates the individual (self-interest, benefits and resources). Hence, what this study was trying to emphasise was that the assumptions of rationality and resources can only be assessed under optimal conditions and perfect information (which is obviously implausible to achieve). It has been argued that the policy implementation problem in the GDW cannot be explained through limited perspectives such as self-interest, benefits and resources, but rather, at this meso-implementation level, it was crucial to examine whether the actual GDW was what the government had proposed. If not, was this a problem of implementation or rhetoric versus reality? What happened in practice and how has the development programme been implemented on the ground; how had it implemented through a process of social construction by which the actors arrived at their ideas on development and implementation at the local level, specifically in the context of the GDW?

Third, the use of the political economy approach enabled this study to examine the understanding of people at the micro level. In this context, in the causal explanatory discipline, 'its universe of discourse consists entirely of antecedently existing actors and their behaviour' (Ruggie, 1998, p.871), and

this was not sufficient to explain the complex interactions between different actors at village level. It is also limited in its capacity to explain the reasons behind the actions of these actors and, most importantly, to understand how and why local people participate in decision making over economic and development activities. For rational actors, the choice to participate in the decision making process reflects 'the costs and benefits of the choice situation' (Pattie *et al.*, 2004, p.138) and people are not 'uninformed, confused, or irrational choice-makers' (Anderson, 2015, p.27). This means that an individual villager who was expected to be a rational actor will participate when the benefits of participation outweigh the costs. However, an actor does not always have adequate information and their actions might be constrained by other factors such as culture and social structure. Similarly, in the SES model, an individual's participation is assumed to be based on resources, but this model offers no logical explanation for the links between socio-economic variables and participation (Verba *et al.*, 1995, p.281). There are individuals and groups who have high socio-economic status but are still not likely to participate (Auh, 1980; Tam *et al.*, 2006; Pattie *et al.*, 2004). Even though there are other factors such as time, money and the civic skills to support the application of the SES model (Verba *et al.*, 1995), it is still unable to explain why villagers fail to participate in decision making in an economic and development programme.

In reality, the outcomes of a programme may not be easy to be measured and be produced based on causal disciplinary approach, due to barriers in areas such as culture, power imbalances and social relations. For instance, in his study of grassroots development in Thailand, Rigg (1991) pointed out that the nature of Thai society explained much about the discrepancies in the grassroots development approach. He stated that the patron-client relationship that existed within the community hampered the objective of empowering the local community, because the participation of the local people in rural development projects was not perceived as enhancing their lives, but was developed based on a 'clique' or village-power relationship (Rigg, 1991). Moreover, Navaro *et al.* (2015), in their study of the LEADER initiative in Wales

and Andalusia which focused on local decentralisation of decision making and on empowering rural communities, found that bureaucracy, top-down and state-led management had constrained the autonomy of local action groups and prevented marginalised groups from participating. Indeed, these arguments are becoming important reasons to examine local people's understanding and beliefs about the concept of participation in decision making process. Seen from this situation, participation and empowerment cannot be reduced purely to causal factors, rather they are actually 'constitutive' parts of certain actions that are socially constructed through social interactions. By understanding the micro-operation level and the actors involved, it is important to reveal how policy development formulated at a central level shapes participation at a local level. This study therefore represents an examination of the micro-operation level in order to understand the nature of the participation proposed and implemented at local level, and to answer the question of how local villagers understand the concept of participation in decision-making in rural development.

Therefore, the political economy perspective was important to guide the empirical work of this study as compared to the rational choice theory and SES model because it facilitated an examination at three different levels: macro, meso and micro. The investigation focused on the ideology, beliefs, position and roles of actors may yield different perceptions and understanding about the programme, thus may affect the results of the Programme at a local level.

Methods

The previous discussion on ontology, epistemology and methodology guided the choice of the methods used in this current study. The discussion above has shown that this study did not treat development and current typologies of participation as separate entities. Rather this research showed the complex and mutual relationship between these two concepts. That is, this study has demonstrated how concepts and theories such as development, rural development, local participation, local politics and the local economy are

constructed based on the 'local and specific' (Furlong and Marsh, 2010) settings, and rejected the positivist approach which treats reality as independent of social phenomena. This involved 'talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context' (Creswell, 2009, p.175). There are two common research approaches: the quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Creswell, 2009). Bryman (2006) outlined three fundamental differences between qualitative research and quantitative research: inductive versus deductive; interpretivism versus the natural science model or hypotheses testing; and constructivism versus objectivism.

Quantitative research is regarded as a credible method as 'being rational, logical, planned and systematic' (Pierce, 2008). However, understanding complex policy development and participation at a local level which involves intrinsic or instrumental cases requires a qualitative methodology rather than a quantitative methodology. This is because qualitative research explores the central phenomenon or the subject of the study in-depth (Creswell, 2009). Given that this study focused on actors, institutions, citizens and the understanding of their social world, a qualitative approach was seen as the most appropriate way to capture their actions and experiences in order to understand development and participation in Malaysia (Bevir and Rhodes, 2002; Mason, 2002; Creswell and Clark, 2007; Bryman, 2006). To understand the context of this study, the researcher has conceptualised the concepts of development, rural development and participation into three levels - macro, meso and micro - in order to explore the overall processes of economic development and the GDW Programme. Thus, it helps systematically to unveil the ideas, norms and beliefs of several actors that involved in the programme.

Bryman (2012, p.36) defined qualitative research as a technique which concentrates on what people say rather than the quantitative collection and analysis of data. That is, it involves the use of words for understanding social phenomena and specifically focuses on interpreting the meanings held by people pertaining to specific problems or issues (Creswell, 2009). Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p.3) defined qualitative research as consisting of a set of

interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. In this current study qualitative research was appropriate in order to understand what people understand and to define development and participation.

This approach is different from quantitative research because it does not separate the researcher from the subjects of the study. The researcher directly interacts with the subjects and is involved in collecting data and observing events, without relying too much on questionnaires used by other researchers (Creswell, 2009), therefore it needs appropriate methods to understand the process or the relationships to the problems or issues (Flick, 2007). Moreover, the use of qualitative research is relevant in this study because the subjects of the study, development and participation, are not static but are changing and becoming more complex, and therefore cannot be captured by quantitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). In relation to this research, qualitative research was appropriate for understanding rapid social change, such as an economic crisis, political instability or class conflicts that might or might not influence the norms, beliefs and understanding of policy makers and local people about development and local participation in rural areas. Using qualitative methods has enabled the description of the contentions between the rhetoric of policy development and the empirical practices of participation in development in rural areas.

Typically, conducting qualitative research requires various sources of data such as document analysis, bulletins, reports and in-depth interviews in which the researcher needs to be involved directly, rather than relying on one single data source (Creswell, 2009).

Case study

The case study has been defined as a deep exploration by the researcher of a particular programme, event, activity or process, or of one or more individual people (Creswell, 2009, p.13). This method was chosen in this current study because it was the most appropriate approach to both answer the research

questions and reflect the situation on the ground in rural Malaysia. It does not seek to test any theory but examines the issue of policy development and participation at different levels of government and at two local settings in order to obtain an in-depth explanation. Case studies have commonly been associated with the qualitative research approach because they enable the researcher to generate intensive and detailed explanation about the case, although this was not the primary issue in this case because case study can be used by either research method; quantitative or qualitative research (Bryman, 2012). Even so, based on the epistemology of qualitative research discussed above, the case study approach is useful for providing a 'precise description or reconstruction of cases' (Flick, 2014, p.121).

Based on the four research questions this study was intended to enable an understanding of public participation in decision making and its implementation in rural villages. A case study was used extensively in understanding and evaluating public policy. Yin (2014, p.2) outlined three reasons why a researcher should use the case study research method; '(1) the main research questions are 'how' or 'why' questions; (2) a researcher has little or no control over behavioural events; and (3) the focus of study is a contemporary (as opposed to entirely historical) phenomenon'. So the case study method offered the opportunity to understand how the political and economic relationship shaped policy development and its implementation at the local level. More specifically, this study was designed to answer the question why there was a lack of public participation in decision making process in economic and development programme.

To further investigate the research topic via case studies two local GDW villages were chosen. These two villages provided some comparison of similarities and differences in GDW Programme implementation. In Malaysia, there are thirteen states, and the state of Kedah is one of the Peninsular's states that have implemented the GDW at village level, and is also among the poorest states in Malaysia. It contains the highest number of villages which were involved in the implementation of the GDW; 1,900 villages were involved

and the experience of these villages may give more opportunities to learn about the development and participation programme (Community Development Department (CDD), Kedah Branch, 2015). During the first and second waves of the GDW in 1996 and 2003 respectively, five agencies were involved in monitoring the programme. However, after the general election in 2008, responsibility for the GDW was retained by only two agencies: the Community Development Department, Kedah branch (KEMAS) which monitored 1,027 villages and the Kedah Regional Development Authority (KEDA) which monitored 873 villages (CDD, Kedah Branch, 2015). To date, there are approximately 1,900 VDSC leaders and 1,900 VDSC secretaries in the state of Kedah (Mansor, 2016). It is clearly impossible to conduct doctoral research in all of these villages. With limited resources and a major time constraint, a maximum of two villages could be selected. These two villages were not chosen on the basis of a sampling logic which could lead to generalizing the finding to a larger population (Yin, 2014), but were instead chosen by identifying several characteristics which were of research interest. These two villages therefore might be unique places from which to understand this whole research topic. These villages were selected in terms of criteria that will allow the research questions to be answered (Bryman, 2012) and there were several criteria which could provide useful information to learn more about the GDW Programme, such as their similarities as GDW villages, being led by the VDSC, implementing similar activities to support the programme and experiences in the programme; as well as similarities in the economic activities of the villagers, ethnic composition, population size, infrastructures within the village, types of association, occupations of the villagers and education level. At least two case studies were required to compare the implementation of the GDW in different villages. It should be possible to tease out the important concepts which can explain why the implementation of GDW to encourage public participation varies between villages, also known as *kampung*.



Figure 6.1: Map of Kedah State

At the beginning of the research in 2016, for convenience, two villages near to each other in Kota Setar District were initially identified as the case study villages. Kota Setar District contains the highest number of villages in Kedah State. The two selected villages were both under the jurisdiction of the same local government, Alor Setar City Council; they were *Gunung Hilir* village and *Maju* village. The study of these two GDW villages was intended at the beginning in the belief that they would help to illustrate stories, beliefs, preferences and different understandings of the Programme among local villagers. In 2017, at the beginning of the fieldwork study, the two villages were visited and it was realised that they both showed a similar pattern (neither had ever experienced or learned about the GDW) and could not offer the important experiences which were needed to answer the research questions. They were therefore unable to provide the researcher with different information or ‘niche’ factors pertaining to public participation in the decision making. In order to get ‘balance and variety...opportunities to learn’ (Stake, 2005, p.153), it was therefore important to draw out as many characteristics of the villagers as possible as they might provide opportunities to learn about participation in the GDW Programme. So to find the best case study which could provide the required data and information, only one village

was chosen from Kota Setar District, the *Maju* village. The researcher decided to find a new second village which had both similar and different characteristics which would enable to gather sufficiently different data from the two villages. The characteristics of the new village were similar to the first chosen village, thus, one new village was selected from Kubang Pasu District, the *Cemerlang* village. This second village was chosen because it showed characteristics which would make it possible to tease out the differences in decision making process and its implementation on the ground. This village was actively involved in the implementation of the GDW Programme and had been nominated as one of the excellent villages across the whole of Malaysia. Eventually, two very different villages were selected to assist in understanding public participation in decision making in the GDW. The two different case study villages were chosen in order to tease out differences and similarities in the practice of public participation in the GDW Programme. The *Cemerlang* village was selected because it had been described by the CDD officer as an 'actively engaged village' because the village was very active and frequently involved in the GDW Programme organised by the CDD. Because of this, the village was well known by the CDD officer due to its active involvement in the GDW Programme. Furthermore, the village headman was also known by the CDD officer and was described as quite influential because he had a degree-level qualification and worked as a government officer. With his positive education and working background, it was easy for this local leader to work with the CDD officer because he knew how the government system works. The positive image of the leader and the active VDSC members were well known by the villagers and they had a good rapport with them. This meant that the positive image and structural context of this actively engaged village could provide a lot of information on how the villagers participated in the GDW Programme. On the other hand, the *Maju* village was described by the CDD officer as a 'less actively engaged village'. Like the first village, this village was also led by the village headman and the VDSC. However they did not having a good rapport with the CDD officer and had been labelled as not active because they had never participated in any GDW Programme, for example the village competition programme. Their presence was therefore less recognised

by the CDD officer. Compared with *Cemerlang* village, *Maju* village had a poor infrastructure with unpaved roads and no community hall, and the village headman had been using his own home for any village meeting. Different from *Cemerlang* village, the VDSC in *Maju* village was unknown by villagers and rarely communicated with them, let alone encouraging them to participate in the GDW Programme. So with its very different background from *Cemerlang* village, *Maju* village could provide contrasting information and a different perspective on the GDW Programme.

The two selected case study villages therefore provided different contexts and experiences, and this was useful for understanding how these contexts and circumstances contributed to a variations and similarities in the understanding and practice of public participation in decision making in the GDW Programme.

Research sites

Both of the selected villages can best be described in terms of several important characteristics: population and geography, and economic and social activity. First, in term of population and geography, Alor Setar is the capital city of Kedah state and the total population of Kedah in 2019 was about 2,178,700 (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2019). There are twelve districts or *daerah* in Kedah and Kota Setar is one of it. Within Kota Setar, there are 27 sub-districts known as *mukim*. Each of these sub-districts has its own unique character and historical background. The first selected village (the *Maju* village) is located within the Kota Setar district and lies to the north-east of Alor Setar about 5.2 miles from the capital city. All of the population were Malays, with approximately 172 houses. The second selected village (the *Cemerlang* village) is within the Kubang Pasu District and also located in the northern part of Kedah. It is a farming village about 10 miles from the Jitra town. This village is small with the total member of houses approximating 60, and majority population were Malays.

Second, there were varieties of economic activity in Kedah. The GDP of Kedah was 5.0% in 2019 and the growth rate in the mean monthly income of Kedah state was 5.2% (RM 4,971 or £962) in 2016 lower than the national annual growth rate of 6.2% (RM 6,958 or £1,346) (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2017). The main economic activity is service provision (54.8%), followed by manufacturing (28.6%), agriculture (13.7%), construction (1.8%), and mining and quarrying (0.3%) (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2019). Of its 66,470.80 hectares, 34,914.84 are used for agricultural activities, 704.35 for reserved land, 388.70 for residential use, 107.70 for industrial activities, 43.50 for businesses and 6,070.51 for other uses (Department of Statistics, Kedah, 2014). In both of the selected villages, the villagers earn their income from farming activities such as paddy cultivation, rubber production and fruit and vegetable production. There are also villagers who earn their income as public servants, and from business activities such as small grocery stores and shop proprietors (for example food stall, grocery shop, mini market, furniture shop, tele-communication shop, and petrol station).

Third, in term of social activity, the two villages have conducted various programmes under the supervision of the CDD (Kedah branch), Kota Setar and Kubang Pasu district offices. The annual programme such as a 'Paddy festival' has been conducted every year. This is one of the programmes developed to attract more tourists to come to their places. Other community programmes are also being conducted such as a communal work or *gotong-royong* - is a form of action done by several villagers. Within this programme, the VDSC together with the villagers are expected to work together which in turn could foster a spirit of cooperation and participation within the villages. In each village, there are various infrastructures such as road, water and electricity supply, telecommunication services, clinics, schools, mosques and house of worships. There are also police stations and public halls for community activities.

Data collection

In this study, a combination of data collection methods was used, involving document analysis, secondary data analysis and in-depth interviews. This triangulation method has enabled accurate cross-checking of the findings. Before collecting the data, the researcher prepared a case study protocol. Yin (2014, p.84) stated that to ensure the reliability or 'dependability' of a study, the researcher needs to pay close attention to the use of '*case study protocol* to deal with the documentation problem in detail...and the development of a *case study database*'. Shenton (2004) proposed that the researcher needs to ensure that there is rigour in reporting the findings which will enable other researchers to replicate the work by following the same procedure. These approaches are intended to help to justify the theoretical inferences used in research. Within this case study protocol, several important elements were prepared in advance such as a letter giving an overview of this research study which states the title, aims, purposes and rationale of the study; the procedures of data collection (for example the names of the respondents, the specific dates of the interviews, access to the villages and public offices); the areas which the interviews would cover (developed specifically to two major respondent groups, the villagers and the public officials), and finally the preliminary thoughts of the case study report (for example, a preliminary outline of the case study report, potential journals which might publish the work, and an annotated bibliography) (Yin, 2014).

There were therefore several sources of data collection in this study. The first phase of data collection was document analysis from policy papers, annual reports and documents reporting on meetings' in order to examine policy statements and efforts made by the government in relation to the GDW Programme. These types of document are accessible through internet searches, government reports, local newspapers and Malaysia's national archive. These documents are important in a case study because they help the researcher to verify the rhetorical policy and the reality in the real practice of the GDW at the local level. Then, secondly, the available data were

examined to gain an overall picture of the Malaysian state. The main sources were the reviewed journal articles, the government of Malaysia's publication books, the short and medium-term Malaysia Plans and the statistical data from the WB.

The third phase of data collection was in-depth semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect information from all the respondents in order to give them the opportunity to expand on their answers and thus provide richer data than would have been possible with structured interviews. The semi-structured interview was chosen because they provide a basic checklist during the interview and restrain the researcher from discussing the topic that was not related to the subject. In this interview process, the researcher provided each of the participants with prior information about the areas which the interviews would cover. However, it must be noted that this study is a qualitative one, so the researcher probed the questions continuously from the initial responses given by the participants. The interviews were first developed in English and then were translated into Malaysian in consideration for the villagers' limited understanding of the English language. The face-to-face interviews were also conducted in the Malaysian language. The interviewees' responses were recorded (with the respondent's permission) using a digital recorder and this was informed in advance to the participants. The digital recorder was placed in sight of the participants. On the completion of the fieldwork, the interview responses were transcribed into English. The transcriptions were complemented by the addition of basic information such as the place of the study, the activity involved, the respondents and the purpose of the study.

There were two stages of conducting interviews in this research. First, in-depth interviews were conducted with 39 local people (Table 6.1). The total numbers of respondents in the two villages were considered to be sufficient to answer the research questions, as Warren (2001, p.99) suggested that 'to have a non-ethnographic qualitative interview study published, the minimum number of interviews seems to fall in the range of 20-30'. In each of the two

villages, respondents were approached on the basis of purposive sampling which involved participants with various backgrounds such as being voluntary and community association members, local business owners, local leaders, religious leaders, and any local people found to be relevant during the interview process. Although such purposive sampling is not the ideal sampling technique, it gave this study an opportunity to gather information from various levels of local people and was not limited to people who were already engaged in the programme.

The first phase of the interviewing therefore started at the ground level, with local villagers, in both case studies. The interviews were conducted at a time and place which was convenient to the respondents. For example, the interviews were conducted in two sessions, morning and evening. The morning session usually started at approximately 10 or 11 o'clock. This was normal because the respondents were willing to be interviewed after they finished their work, such as in a paddy field (mostly for males) or after they had finished their daily household chores such as cooking and laundry (for females). For an evening session, the interview started at approximately five or six o'clock after they had performed *Asar* prayer. Both sessions were arranged based on the requests made by the respondents. The place of the interview was predominantly at a respondent's house; only one interview was conducted at a village hall. Each interview took from 30 to 60 minutes. In the case study at *Cemerlang* village, three interviews were discarded because one respondent's answers were not related to the research questions and the other two respondents stopped and withdrew in the middle of the interview. The reasons for their withdrawal were personal circumstances because they had to deal with urgent matters at the time of the interview, such as fetching their children from school. In *Maju* village, two interviews were discarded because the respondents' answers were not related to the research. All the data from the rejected interviews were discarded.

Table 6.1: Categories and Number of Respondents

No.	Categories of the respondents	The proposed number of the respondents	The real number of the respondents	Gender of the respondents
1	First stage	Year 2016	Year 2017	
	Members of Village Development and Security Committee (VDSC) from each village	2	2	2 Males
	1) Chairmen (also known as the village headmen)	2	1	1 Female
	2) Secretary			
	Ordinary villagers:	Around 16 to 20	18 (Three were discarded)	5 Males 13 Females
	1) Cemerlang village			
2	2) Maju village	Around 16 to 20	18 (Two were discarded)	9 Males 9 Females
	Second stage			
	Policy maker at the MRRD	1	4	4 Males
	Public officer from the Community Development Department (CDD) at central level	1	1	1 Male
	An officer from deputy state secretary (development)/state economic planning unit at state of Kedah	3	1	1 Male
	An officer from the CDD Kedah state	1	2	2 Males
	Kota Setar Assistant district officer	1	1	1 Male
	An officer from Kedah Regional Development Authority (KEDA)	1	1	1 Male
	The sub-district headman or <i>Penghulu</i>	1	1	1 Male
	Other related participant: academics/Policy developer	1	1	1 Male
	Total	54	51	

Second, semi-structured in-depth interviews were also conducted with responsible officers from the MRRD, the state secretary of Kedah (specifically at the state economic development planning unit), the CDD officer and district officer at Kedah state. These officers were selected based on their position in implementing the GDW at central, state and local levels. In term of gaining access to these respondents, the researcher personally knew several public officials, and this made it easy to approach the government offices. Semi-structured interview was used to collect information from all of these respondents.

Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves a variety of processes: 'Data analysis involves examining, sorting, categorising, evaluating, comparing, synthesising and contemplating the coded data as well as reviewing the raw and recorded data' (Neuman, 1997, p.427). However, qualitative data analysis has been criticised in terms of validity and reliability because it cannot produce 'reliable data' compared with the quantitative approach. This is because qualitative research does not focus on causal relationships in the way that quantitative research does. Lincoln and Guba (1985), however, argued that there are several approaches to promoting confidence in information recorded by qualitative researchers; for instance, choosing appropriate research methods, triangulation and iterative questioning. Yin (2014, p.48) also proposed several strategies to address this issue when conducting a qualitative case study, such as employing 'pattern matching, explanation building, addressing rival explanations, and using logic models'. As discussed in chapters 2, 3 and 4, the concepts of development, rural development and participation and power in development in other countries and most importantly in the Southeast Asian countries were examined in order to produce the 'pre-post patterns of outcomes' that might be similar to the case of the GDW Programme, thus this can increase the validity of the data.

In this research, thematic analysis was used to analyse the data from the semi-structure qualitative interviews. Braun and Clarke (2006, p.6) define thematic analysis as ‘a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data’. It involves six key phases: 1) Familiarising yourself with your data, 2) Generating initial codes, 3) Searching for themes, 4) Reviewing themes, 5) Defining and naming themes, and 6) Producing the report (Table 6.2).

Phase one required the researcher to familiarise herself with the data and this involved the process of reading and re-reading in order to grasp ‘the depth and breadth of the content’ because the researcher needed to fully understand what was going on in the fieldwork. The second phase required the researcher to interpret and reflect on the data based on her understanding of the theory and practice. This helped in the generation of the initial codes which were relevant to the research. The codes were divided: first, the interview codes from policy makers and policy implementers, and second the interview codes from the villagers in the two case studies.

Table 6.2: Phases of Thematic Analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1.Familiarising yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2.Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3.Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4.Reviewing themes	Checking in the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.
5.Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6.Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Source: Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.35

In phases three and four, the codes identified from the interviews were combined and assembled into meaningful themes. In order to ensure that the data made sense in the context of the study, the researcher compared whether the data from the fieldwork were consistent with or different from the theories and the findings from the literature review. The researcher found that the respondents had both different and similar understandings of the concepts and this led to a search for patterns, categories and themes in the field-notes which emerged during the interview process. In this study, the data were organised into topics or themes, such as development (relating to the aspect of decision making, the reason for the introduction of the GDW, the actors involved), rural development (elements such as poverty reduction, modernising agriculture, encouragement of local participation) and participation and empowerment. This generated five themes, decentralisation of authority, power transfer, self-independence, pre-decided programme and centralised decision making, identified from nine codes derived from the interviews with policy makers and implementers. Then, in both case studies, the fifteen codes identified were collated into six major themes: patronage, power and control, an autocratic leader, undemocratic administrative body and undemocratic lead public official.

In phase five, these themes were rigorously and repeatedly named and renamed to ensure that they provided meaningful explanations for the data from the interviews. This included defining and matching the themes with the findings from the literature review of previous studies and it produced solid themes which enabled the researcher to map the interrelations between both case studies' interviews and the interviews with policy makers and implementers at central and state government levels. This was where the gap between the rhetoric of the GDW and its reality were identified. Marshall and Rossman (2006, pp.161-162) stated that 'interpretation brings meaning and coherence to the themes, patterns, categories, developing linkages and a story line that makes sense and is engaging to read'. This process therefore required the researcher to look back and forth at the field notes from the interviews. These topics were then applied to the emergent data from the fieldwork and

were subject to change in order to avoid the risk of subjecting participants to a bias caused by the researcher's beliefs instead of the issue being addressed (Patton, 2002, pp.459-460).

Finally, the evaluation process involved the overall processes of data collection, data analysis and the interpretation of outcomes of the GDW Programme. This evaluation enabled the researcher to make informed judgements about the programme. It was a combination of 'analytic induction, constant comparative analysis, and building grounded theory' (Marshall and Rossman, 2011, p.220). In addition, data triangulation and peer checking can also be important strategies for reducing potential researcher bias. This was assisted by the computer-aided analysis software package NVivo12, which helped the researcher to enhance the indexing and categorising of the concepts in the study. But the use of this tool had to be complemented by the researcher's own understanding of the current situation and the real-life events which occurred in each village, such as social interactions, political affiliations, culture and faith.

Ethics

Consideration of ethical principles in this research was paramount. Neuman (1997, p.443) defined ethics as 'what is or is not legitimate to do, or what a 'moral' research procedure involves'. There are four main areas of ethical principles which need to be taken into consideration; avoiding any harmful effect to the participants; obtaining informed consent; confidentiality; and the avoidance of deception (Bryman, 2012; Diener and Crandall, 1978; Neuman, 1997). In the following section, the key ethical issues which affect this research were discussed; informed consent, confidentiality and potential harmful effects.

Before conducting the fieldwork, the researcher prepared an informed consent form and distributed it to all potential participants. It was in the form of a sheet of paper containing information about the details of participation in the

research process, such as the right of the participants to participate or to withdraw at any time, and the reassurance that all participants would remain anonymous. They were asked whether or not they were willing to participate in the interview. Before each interview, the researcher informed the participants once again about their right to participate, and if the participants agreed, they were asked to sign the informed consent form, and from the fieldwork there were five respondents who had withdrawn from the interview.

The identity of the participants in both groups and the name of the two GDW villages were kept confidential; they remained anonymous and pseudonyms were used in order to avoid any potential problem or harmful effect to any of the participants. However, only the names of the ministry and the government agencies were retained. In order to ensure their anonymity and privacy, the interviews and the transcribed data from the respondents were only used within the study period. The results of the research were communicated to the respondents and a copy of any published results will be given to the respondents upon request. It is clearly stated on the informed consent form that the results of the research might be used for future research or as additional information. Once the research has been completed and the thesis approved all recorded material will be destroyed.

In order to ensure confidentiality and security of the data, the voice recordings from the interviews were stored on the hard-disk of the researcher personal computer, and its movement was restricted from the fieldwork to the personal computer only. The personal computer is protected with a password. The transcription of the recordings was also stored in a locked and secure desk in university. The voice recordings and transcriptions were protected by the University of Sheffield Server. As a part of a consent process, detailed information on how the research materials would be managed was clearly stated in the informed consent form that was distributed to the participants and all recorded interviews were stored in a locked drawer on the University's property.

Throughout this research study the safety and security of the participants was taken into consideration. Bryman (2012, p.136) recommended that the researcher should take care to foresee and avoid any consequences which might be expected to cause harm to the participants. The researcher asked the participants prior to the interviews whether they had any health issues, stress or any traumatic experiences which would not allow them to continue with the interview. The interviews were conducted smoothly and all respondents were willing to be interviewed without any force being exerted by the researcher.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodology and methods which guided the empirical research which follows in the subsequent chapters. The first section presented and explained the methodology by outlining the importance of and justification for the use of the political economy perspective specifically in Malaysia's context. The economic development policy was discussed and participation from the political economy perspective by investigating the patterns of influence and interactions of actors in policy development and in the implementation of and participation in the GDW was addressed in detail. The justifications provided rejected the positivist position in order to understand development and participation in terms of causal factors and the economic model of development.

In the second section, the specific methods used in this study were critically discussed in order to answer the research questions. The discussion first addressed the importance for this research of adopting a qualitative research method compared with quantitative research. Second, the discussion considered the case study approach which was employed to understand the GDW in policy development, implementation and participation at the local level. Following that, detailed descriptions of the two selected case study villages were given.

In the final section of this chapter, the ethical considerations which the researcher took into account were discussed and details of the procedure and the process of the research in terms of these ethical considerations were provided. The following chapter will contain the analysis of reasons for the introduction of the GDW Programme and the interviews with policy makers at central and state government levels.

Chapter 7

Decentralisation of Decision Making in the Rural Development Programme

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the formulation and implementation of the GDW at both macro- and meso-levels. It is divided into two main sections. The first section features a discussion based on the first research question: 'Why was the Visionary Capability Movement Programme introduced in Malaysia?' The focus is on the GDW from a policy perspective. Then there is an explanation of the main aim of the Programme: 'decentralisation' to encourage public participation in decision making in economic development. Its three main features are described: 'transfer of authority', 'power transfer' and self-independence. The second section discusses the second research question: 'How has the GDW Programme been implemented on the ground?' The section starts with a description of the role of related government agencies and their understanding of the Programme. This provides the context for explaining the implementation of the Programme at a local level. It describes two main features: 'pre-decided' programme and centralised decision making.

This case study was based on three months in the field. Interviews were conducted with 12 respondents, four policy makers and one policy implementer from central government, and four policy implementers from state and two policy implementers from district levels, and one associate professor from a local public university (Table 6.1, p.147). The findings suggest that the GDW was introduced in the name of 'decentralisation' by the central government to local level. In practice, the idea of decentralisation was implemented mainly through public participation in decision making, a means

by which the government transferred top-down responsibility onto the villagers. At local level, it was implemented by the public officials through the 'pre-decided' programme and centralised decision making. These approaches have contributed to the lack of actual public participation in the implementation of the Programme on the ground.

The decentralisation of decision making

From the interviews with policy makers and policy implementers, 'decentralisation' of decision making to encourage public participation was confirmed as a main key theme for understanding the introduction of the GDW in Malaysia. The introduction of the GDW was seen as a means to 'decentralise' the decision making from central government to the local level in order to encourage public participation on their own village development. This was done by teaching the village development and security committees (VDSCs) members to plan for their village, such as by providing skills, training and information.

Government initiative [through the GDW] includes transfer the knowledge about village planning including costing and everything to the VDSC members. [For example], the VDSC members are educate about five-year plan for their village and government teaches them to monitor that plan....this plan is called *pelan induk desa* (village action plan)...Actually, government wanted to transfer what they currently do to the local villagers from time to time [to make them independent] (Ismail, a policy maker).

For policy implementers, decentralisation was regarded as one of the best approaches to provide opportunities for public to participate in their own development.

If we didn't have this programme the villagers would suffer...this is proof that the government is really concerned about the villagers...this programme was important because through it people can manage their development based on their own creativity (Yunus)

The decentralisation was also appreciated by policy implementers as it simplified their job

...the VDSC plays important role in managing the village...[hence] it's easy for us [the policy implementers] to manage the village...(Salleh)

...if we have tried several times to help them but they didn't want to change, so we can't do anything. The village also will not develop (Ayob)

These and other similar statements revealed that with decentralisation, all responsibilities for local development were transferred to the villagers. Thus, if they failed to participate, this would be due to the failure of the villagers and not the policy implementers.

The commitment towards decentralisation was further evidenced with the establishment of a specific unit to handle the GDW. This was followed by a circular from the Chief Secretary of the then MRD, No. 3 Year 2004, on the establishment of the Visionary Capability Movement Unit: 'This unit was formed to make the implementation of the programme better organised so that it can function effectively in order to achieve the goal of the stated programme' (MRRD, 2004). But, the decentralisation of decision making power was without 'direct allocation provided under any details or specific activity' (Parliament, House of Representatives, 2010) for the implementation of the GDW by government agencies. This showed the commitment towards the decentralisation process was not real and it only consisted of transferring the burden to the local villagers. Yet, the decision making remained within central government.

Various approaches have been implemented in order to decentralise the decision making to the villagers and one of these was the *Konvensyen Tahunan Gerakan Daya Wawasan* or yearly convention for local people. This convention was introduced as a platform for local villagers to share their ideas and feedback about the implementation of the GDW. This exemplifies the 'decentralisation' of decision making to the grassroots.

...[the convention is to] encourage continuous discussion, dialog and conscientisation of local people...the most important thing is, in order to organise the convention, the VDSC within the selected village need to plan and organise this convention [Zach, a public university professor]

In this convention, the local people especially the VDSC members were given chances to provide their opinions and ideas through several workshops that have been determined by us [the policy maker]. There were several scopes [areas] such as village development, infrastructure, and economy. So they will give their ideas in this workshop [Johari, a policy implementer]

In this convention, only the VDSC members and the selected villagers participated because they were considered as the local leaders. As in this case the VDSC members acted as the 'best' mechanism to fulfil government decentralisation process. However, this mechanism was not actually the 'best' available one and it became one major problem in the implementation of the GDW (Chapter 8).

The above statement shows the existence of 'decentralisation of decision making' to the local villagers and it was best described based on three main elements: transfer of authority, power transfer and self-independence.

Transfer of authority

Several agencies were established to develop rural areas. These agencies were formed based on regions such as North, South, and East of Peninsular and Borneo Malaysia. Considering these regions and huge geographical areas that they needed to cover, the introduction of the GDW was one of the means to transfer the authority of central government to the state government and local level. For policy makers only those who had 'soul and passion' were able to implement the GDW and this matched with the roles of the implementers at the state and local level.

...when you deal with the community, the people who handle it must have a soul, if you've a passion, it will reveal your creativity and etc...you should look at the people who have experienced with this programme [the GDW] and at the agency level [it is more suitable because it is] where most of these people are very passionate (Adam, a policy maker)

The policy implementers at the state and local level were seen as capable to implement the GDW due to their experience and closeness to the local people. According to the interviewees they were responsible to be mediators between government and local villagers.

...the CDD officers were close to local people and they would be kept informed of any programmes planned at the local level...(Salleh)

We are the implementers at grassroots, so we know what local people need and what are the weaknesses of the village (Johari)

From these statements it was assumed by the government that the transfer of authority was a good means to avoid responsibilities and it was considered as appropriate because the Community Development Department (CDD) agency needed to cover a huge number of villages throughout Malaysia, so by having transfer of authority made it easier for them to perform their tasks.

...there are 14,000 villages in Malaysia which under the supervision of the CDD. It didn't include villages under other government agencies like FELDA, FELCRA, KEJORA, KETENGAH, and in Sabah and Sarawak (Salleh)

...in Kedah alone, the CDD officers needed to supervise and monitor more than 1,000 villages. This was more difficult in a district with such a huge number of villages because each CDD officer had to monitor and supervise 60 villages (a ratio of 1:60) and this created considerable difficulty. So, we have tendency to only visited the villages that were easy for us to reach (Ayob)

In the same vein, the Kedah Regional Development Authority (KEDA) officers found the transfer of authority helpful because KEDA has received strong support from the Chief Minister and by local villagers, so that it was easy for them to implement the GDW.

...it is not difficult for me to enter each village in Kedah state and disseminate information about the GDW...[This is because KEDA has] received strong support from the state office, and the Chief Minister of Kedah is also the president of KEDA (Ishak)

However, the transfer of authority to the state and local level has not enabled a 'real transfer of authority' towards public officials in the implementation of the GDW. This was because

...we weren't involved in the formulation of the ADSIM, it was all done by the CDD headquarters staff and the Ministry [central government]; we only received it from the CDD at the state level and just implemented it (Ayob)

The responsibility to manage and monitor the implementation of the GDW at village level has been decided by the MRRD (Ishak)

...our role is not only to manage the community, but also various other tasks (Harun)

These statements suggest that, despite the important roles of the policy implementers, they still were rarely involved in decision making processes. In turn, the decisions made at central level were not considered any input from policy implementers and the decisions made may not solve the real problem at local level.

Likewise, financial transfer was considered the best way for the decentralisation process. However, the transfer of authority to the state and local levels did not come with financial transfer. Each year, all of these government levels and agencies were dependent on allocations from central government. For CDD officers, budget allocation was very limited from year to year.

...the budget allocation for each meeting [was also limited]: each CDD officer only receives RM 100 (£20) for a meeting, and it must be shared between 60 villages (Ayob)

...the budget allocation for the activities are also shrinking. In this year [2017], we didn't receive budget for the implementation of the GDW. Even at department level we didn't receive it (Harun).

The absence of financial transfer created a lot of problems and this led to delays in the implementation of the GDW.

Currently we have stopped for a while because we are having a budget shortage...[so] we are focusing on [encouraging local villagers] developing a *profil kampung* or village profile (Yunus)

[We have problem] because we can't bring the panel for the village competition to visit the site because we don't have the allocation for that. So these panels only evaluate the local people's project through presentation (Harun)

The delay in the requested budget has created problem because when it finally arrived at the village it exceeded the time frame of the planned programme.

...the budget that we have requested was transferred at the wrong time and it was delayed...[when they received the allocation] it no longer reflect the time frame of the programme...[when we need it urgently] we receive it after the urgent period...(Ayob)

As a consequence the policy implementers became demotivated. Hence, from this section it can be inferred that the 'transfer of authority' without financial power intended in the introduction of the GDW. In fact it was the way in which central government strengthened its power at state and local levels (Chapter 9).

Power transfer

From the interviews with policy makers and implementers, the initiation of the GDW was intended to transfer the power to plan, decide and control of economic and development activities to the local people. The reasons for this transfer were because,

In the past, government has provided everything for the local villages, but now, until one phase, the government wants the initiative from local people (Harun)

Each state may have different perspective [on economic and development] and context (Adam)

Due to these reasons it was important for the local people to have power to make decisions, but instead of the two reasons stated above, a policy implementer indicated that the introduction of the GDW was because

...now it's more difficult [to receive budget allocation from the government]. [With the introduction of the GDW], the villages need to show their effort and bold their villages in order to get allocation from the government, for example, by participating in village competition. When they have participated the government will know them and then government will help them (Ayob)

This statement suggests that a tight budget allocation was one of the reasons for power transfer to the local villagers.

Yaakob, a policy implementer, stated that, a good plan by an active VDSC is able to generate income for the village. He shared his experience of one successful village in Kedah state which had an active VDSC and how they planned to generate income for the villagers:

...the VDSC wrote a letter to the chairman of the society [*Puspanita*] to sell their crispy dried banana. The society then replied to the letter and they visited this village. So this village has created a network with the society, and the society will have access to a supply from this village. The village received a huge income.

Adam, a policy maker also provided an example of how power transfer to generate income to local villagers can bring success not only to their own village but also to adjacent villages:

...there was one village which could not accommodate the high demand for their homestay activity, so to solve this problem the VDSC members and its leader decided to collaborate with the two nearest villages. After a discussion, the two villages agreed to support the oversupply of the homestay demand (Adam).

Adam believed that the transfer of power to local villagers not only increased income to the village but also that success can ‘trickle down’ to other villages.

The government gave attention to the process of implementing the transfer of power through village meetings. So, with the ‘transferred power’ by the government, the local villagers can make their own decision. Ishak, a policy implementer stated that the VDSC

...needs to hold a meeting every month, which means twelve times a year...they need to discuss their plan and make decisions on any matters. Then they also need to discuss and decide whether to call for assistance from the KEDA or KEMAS if they need any collaboration or help.

At these meetings, the villagers were expected to report what they needed and feed these requests to the respective agencies. According to Yaakob, a policy implementer, the village meetings were important because

...the villagers can report in the minutes of the meeting that they need some allocation for paving the village street, so, with that information we can plan and ask for an allocation and projection in the next year’s budget allocation for that development.

Likewise, Ayob (a policy implementer) also pointed out that every village meeting must be attended by a CDD facilitator, so through the meetings,

...the VDSC can inform the facilitators about what they need and what they have decided. These facilitators will then channel the information to the specific agencies based on the requests and the decisions made by the VDSC.

At the same time, the village meeting was used by the public officials to ‘inform’ the VDSC about what they should do, for example

...the VDSC members need to organise a meeting and inform local villagers that they need to participate in the village competition (Ishak).

We [the CDD officers] organise an annual general meeting and we explain the programme [village competition] during the meeting (Harun)

This indicates that, on the one hand, the village meetings were used to encourage decision making among the villagers and, on the other hand, they were also used by the CDD officer as a medium to 'direct' the local people. Thus the village meeting was not seen by the government as important for local people, but was important for public officials to manipulate it for their own purpose.

The 'slow, passive, subsidy-mentality' was a further way to describe local villagers. From these negative descriptions, the government believed that power to control was the best approach to minimise the dependency on government and then the power to control should be transferred to the local villagers. Yaakob provided an example of how the VDSC's leader controlled a village:

...there was one time when the VDSC's leader of *Beri* village had sent a letter to one of the residents asking him to mow his lawn because his house compound was not being maintained properly

According to the interviewees, 'if the leadership in that village is slow, how can they get cooperation from the community? Of course, there will be no planning, and that village can't perform very well' (Yaakob, a policy implementer). So, the best way to improve their relationship with local villagers was by transferring power to control to the VDSC members in the village. Yet, the ability to control the village was only held by the leader.

Ishak stated that the power to control always led to the success of a village. He added that with control, the VDSC can gather a group of people together and get support from the local people, so when the representative or the *penghulu* sees this effort, it can be said that the programme is working and that it has the support of the local people. This was considered desirable by the CDD officer because there was also a VDSC which could only attract two

or three people to the programme. This failure was considered as a lack of control by the VDSC. This however indicated another meaning: while the VDSC has power to control their village, they were also being controlled by the CDD officers. This meant that, decentralisation through power transfer never existed in practice rather, it strengthened the power of the public officials toward local villages under their supervision.

Self-Independence

One of the main motivations behind the GDW appears to have been to reduce the dependency on government assistance. This was in large part a response to an assumption by the government of a lack of public participation based on the experience of the previous rural development programme.

From 14,000 villages [early implementation of the GDW], only 20% were considered as the GDW village from 100%...from this percentage, only about 2800 villages that were active...and other less success village (Yunus, a policy maker)

In turn, the local people had to rely on government assistance. To avoid what it perceived as a burden, the government called for the decentralisation of decision making to the local villagers through a self-independence approach. The government believed that public participation in the GDW would increase their standard of living and this self-independence was used as a means to urge people to improve their living conditions through income generation, entrepreneurship, the establishment of co-operative body and village competition, and thus move out of poverty.

According to the interviewees, self-independence was important to enable

...the community within the village to manage and generate economy and income for the village...Each village has their own niche (Yusuf)

...the government, especially the CDD, does not want local people to feel that they cannot do anything by themselves because they are poor...it is just the people [who do not want to change] (Salleh)

With this in mind, the interviewees proposed several economic activities that the local villagers could venture into and increase their income. For example, they stated that local people could generate income by producing

crispy banana, dried fish to be sold to the customers, and they have accustomed the production from the traditional method (Yaakob)

...the village can produce dried food such as banana and tapioca crisps, and it can generate income for the villagers (Salleh)

...focusing on large scale production, and the local people will participate in the projects. For example, the large project for cage fish farming can give a high return to the local people (Sulaiman)

For Yunus, a policy maker, economic activity is believed to generate income for the village, and this belief mirrored the stated reason for public participation in the GDW: poverty reduction through income generation.

The power to generate income by the villagers, however, cannot be generalised to all villages because different levels of skill among VDSC lead to different outcomes. For example, Harun, a policy implementer stated that 'most of the successful villages were led by educated VDSC and he or she had experience dealing with government officers'. From the interviews, it is important to note here that, most of the VDSC were not from a well-educated background. Mostly, they had worked as farmers and were self-employed. This indicates that the power to plan had empowered only a small number of the VDSC and it had disempowered most of other inexperienced and less educated ones.

As well as income generation, entrepreneurship is another way to explain self-independence. According to the interviewees, local business activity could reduce their dependency on government. For example,

...people who are hardworking if they do some business, they can survive and even can afford to buy a luxurious car. That's how we want people to think and throw away the pessimistic thinking that they had before. What is important for them is, they need to have ambition, skill and that's all. You can survive (Salleh)

This showed that entrepreneurial activity was one of the main approaches for the government to encourage public participation in the GDW. Harun, a policy implementer further explained that when

...there was a potential business within a village or any local entrepreneur who produce such as noodle, then FAMA [government agency] will provide assistance if it saw the business has a potential to be upgraded.

This statement indicates that the government was very selective in distributing resources to the local people. Only 'selected' projects which were seen as beneficial will be supported by the government. This situation was in large part due to the refusal of the government to allocate more budgets to develop rural areas and instead transfer the responsibility to the local people. This was supported by one of the policy makers that in the previous years

...there were huge budget allocations for developing economic activities...that has helped me [public officer] to plan and develop various small economic projects at village level (Yunus)

This has confirmed that self-independence was introduced to reduce governmental responsibility to develop rural areas. That was why the policy implementers advocated the 'initiative, capability and effort' from the local people.

If the villages have effort, initiative and capability, they will be assisted by the government agency...then the government agency identified this village [for further financial assistance] and gave support to this village (Ishak)

...if local people want the government to help them, they must first show the capability of their village to participate in the GDW. This is because government allocation is becoming too small, thus people need to compete to get it (Ayob)

...various agencies will provide help to the village. There are many allocations which have been given to develop the village (Harun)

Not only that, from time to time, KEDA (government agency) had to check whether local villages under their supervision were already involved in economic activity, or whether any of the villages had applied for any economic projects:

...is there any village that has made any application to create and establish an entrepreneurship activity in their village? Has the village developed entrepreneurship projects for the people? (Ishak)

Once government has provided assistance to the selected project and village, it would be continuously monitored. The aim was to look at whether the economic activity that local people have initiated has increased or decreased their income. This suggests that self-independence was regarded as necessary to reduce local people's dependency on government, in particular higher income and economic activities were highly desirable for the government.

One of the reasons for the government to advocate economic and entrepreneurial activity was because local people were later expected to establish a co-operative which could help them to attract more funding to increase their productivity. Yunus stated that 'this was also in line with the concept of public participation where the main aim was to generate profit'. For Yaakob, a co-operative was important because it can bring more income to the village. So, finally, their co-operatives become rich as a result of their own creativity. In addition, the co-operative activity was facilitated through marketing activities. According to Salleh (a policy implementer), once the co-operative was established, the local people can market their products, for example at a 'shopping complex, or mini market, at local or national level'.

This shows that a co-operative enabled high production and provided huge returns to the local people.

This section has shown that authority transfer, power transfer and self-independence were described as important mechanisms to decentralise power and decision making to improve the economic development of rural people. However, the ideal of 'decentralisation' discussed above does not seem to have been translated into real-life practice (Chapter 8). Hence, the next section discusses the second research question: 'How had the GDW Programme been implemented on the ground?'. Before discussing the implementation process of the GDW, it is necessary to describe the role of government agencies, including the CDD and KEDA, because the role of government agencies is integral to the implementation of the GDW in Malaysia.

Re-centralisation of decentralisation

The implementation of the GDW Programme was the responsibility of the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development (MRRD) (as of 2017). It involved various government agencies but the most important ones which were directly involved in the implementation of the GDW at a local level were the CDD and KEDA. One of the policy makers was a CDD officer in the central government. He pointed out that

...his role was more on formulating the GDW at central government level; [for example] each year we set targets for what we wanted to achieve in the next year, so we developed a plan, known as a rural action plan (PTD) (Yunus)

Whilst Yunus was involved in formulating the policy, Salleh a policy implementer, was involved in implementing the GDW and he was based at the CDD headquarters. He pointed out that as an implementer, 'I convey the needs of the local people to the Ministry'. Basically, Salleh was responsible for monitoring and advising local villagers about the implementation of the GDW. Similarly, at the state level, Ayob and Harun were CDD officers directly

involved in the implementation of the programme at local level. Their roles were to supervise the villages under their authority and sometimes, if they encountered any problems, they would report them to the Ministry through the CDD at the state level. Harun stated that the GDW was important because 'it has created the power and initiatives of the VDSC and due to them being actively engaged in the programme, various agencies have provided help to the villages'.

The complex role of the policy implementer continues within the KEDA agency. KEDA is under the jurisdiction of the MRRD. Ishak, a KEDA officer, stated that his role only covers Kedah state. In Kedah state, he mentioned that, the responsibility to monitor the villages was 1:15 for KEDA officers. The responsibility to manage and monitor the implementation of the GDW at village level had been decided by the MRRD.

As well as the CDD and KEDA, other agencies such as the state economic development unit (BPEN), district office (DO) and *penghulu* were also responsible for the implementation of the GDW. But their roles were more concerned with coordinating the implementation of the GDW at local level. Yaakob stated that at BPEN, his role in the context of the implementation of the GDW was to coordinate the implementation of the programme at state level for example the payment of the VDSC allowance. The allowance was transferred from the central government to his unit before being paid to the VDSC. Before payment was made, he randomly goes to the village in question to check whether the claim and the meeting report tally with what the VDSC had claimed.

For the Assistant District Officer (ADO) and *penghulu*, their main role was related to the selection of the villages to participate in village competitions, such as ADSIM (Chapter 5, p.119). Daud, an ADO, shared that, as an implementer at district level, he needed to identify villages that were willing to participate in ADSIM, then once they have agreed to participate, he needed to identify what kind of assistance the village needs and how it should be

channelled, for example, in terms of infrastructure, tools or machines, or financial assistance. So, the *penghulu* and the district office became the coordinators. In the following section, the implementation of the GDW will be explored in more detail.

As discussed in the first section of this chapter and in Chapter 5, the aim of the GDW was to encourage rural people to participate in their own development. In practice, the implementation of the GDW was far from the sophisticated and extensive participation approaches discussed in Chapter 4 because it re-centralised decision making to the policy implementers. This re-centralisation can be explained through two main features, the 'pre-decided' programme and centralised decision making in the implementation of the GDW.

Pre-decided programme

To participate in their own development affairs local villagers were expected to plan economic and development activities that could enhance their standard of living. However, the policy implementers were very pessimistic about the capability of local villagers to engage in decision making processes. They labelled the local villagers as having 'bad', 'poor', 'negative', and 'no initiative' attitudes to develop their villages. These negative values were considered officially as the major factors that hindered the development in rural areas.

Based on my observations, the attitudes of local people became a big problem, and other agencies also said the same thing, the attitude of the villagers (Yaakob)

Some of them didn't care and didn't have any interest in the programme proposed by the government' (Sulaiman)

...most of the villages were not competitive, no initiative (Harun)

There was also a consensus among the interviewees that the attitudes such as a lack of passion and a lack of support all contribute to the failure of villages to participate in the GDW.

...to ensure a successful rural programme it must be supported by local people. If they do not want to understand or are less passionate about it, the programme will certainly fail... (Salleh)

Some of the policy makers explained that the GDW was supposed to be implemented and participated in by local villagers. However, the local people were believed not to be interested.

...very few of the local people have actually participated; let's say, from 500 local villagers, only 30 people are joining the activity. This is very sad...there's no response from them (Yunus)

The villagers were also accused of not supporting the GDW. They were described as difficult to handle and communicate with. Only when the programme provided quick benefits and returns would the villagers participate.

...the main obstacle was to handle the target group. If they think that programme is not giving any benefit to them, they will not participate (Salleh)

...when the project gives immediate income, the villagers will immediately participate (Ismail)

Hence, according to the public official interviewees, to solve this problem the local villagers needed to change their attitudes and this change could be strategized. They claimed that this change could be achieved through change in local villagers' mentality and attitudes to the *ABC* characteristics: trust (or *Amanah*), independence (or *Berdikari*) and efficiency (or *Cekap*), which combined becomes 'ABC'. With these in mind, the GDW had been organised based on these three characteristics and the policy implementers must make

sure any activities developed under the GDW could achieve ABC characteristics.

...these characteristics have been informed to the VDSC, and when government agencies wanted to develop any programmes, they must make sure the programmes can achieve ABC characteristics...the VDSC must have ABC characteristics, and [thus] this will empower them to participate in the GDW, because they have gained respect and support from the community (Adam, a policy maker)

This indicates that the government, on the one hand, said it wanted to decentralise the decision making to the local people but, on the other hand, re-centralised the decision making back to the implementers through a 'pre-decided' programme. In effort the policy makers and implementers were behaving autocratically in formulating and implementing the GDW. All plans were made by the policy makers and implementers on how local people can actively participate in their own development affairs.

When we [Zach and other policy makers] first developed the yearly convention, we wanted to make sure the VDSC should become the leader of the convention. However, it turned to be upside-down, the chief secretary put his name as the leader for the convention...[it was because] he afraid this programme was not running...these people [the policy maker and implementer] didn't want to be behind the scene...This is so challenging because people who wanted to develop local people didn't have confident towards people that they wanted to develop...(Zach)

These results suggest that the policy makers and implementers had pre-decided the programme because they were highly sceptical about the capability of local villagers and also because they were used to being autocratic.

Centralised decision making

The most common agencies in Kedah state were the CDD and KEDA, including state agency like BPEN, District Office and *penghulu*. Commonly, the interviewee roles were to act as mediators between government and villagers

while monitoring the implementation from 'outside'. In practice, these roles did not indicate any decentralisation process, rather the re-centralisation of decision making to the implementers, moving it away from local villagers. This was largely due to the 'standard' criteria that the policy implementers imposed on local villagers and this standard was planned by the central government. They believed that the standard criterion for each village for success in the implementation of the GDW was effective leadership by local leaders which, in practice, meant the VDSC members.

If we observe the successful village, we can see that the VDSC members and its leader were very active (Yaakob)

Commonly, villages that are good and actively engaged are having a good VDSC chairman (Salleh)

Factor that contributes to the success village is because the village has good leadership (Daud)

...the active leadership...if the leadership in that village is slow, how can they get cooperation from the community...The local leadership...is important factor to ensure the success of the village (Yunus)

It's actually due to the VDSC's leadership. Even if there are many NGOs in that village, still the VDSC plays important role and acting as an anchor for any programme (Adam)

Therefore, to ensure all villages could produce the same results, the implementation of the GDW must be done through 'enhancement of skills and training' of the VDSC members. In turn, various training and skills development were organised and the attendance of the VDSC members were made compulsory. This showed that the decision making was made by the policy implementers and too few that the local villagers participated in determining their own development affairs. Thus, the local villagers and the VDSC members only needed to follow what the government had proposed.

So, the government developed training and skills programmes to enhance the leadership of the VDSC. Through this training the VDSC was educated to prepare a village profile or *profil kampung*, and skilled to conduct village

meetings and in the way to assign the roles to other VDS committees. According to the interviewees, these skills were important to provide knowledge and exposure to the VDSC members in order to acquire the skills to manage the village and specifically in the implementation of the GDW.

What is important for them is, they need to have ambition, skill and that's all. You can survive (Salleh)

They [the VDSCs] managed the government agencies activities, NGOs and higher institutions and at the same time they can generate income and support the operational cost [for their village]. So, the VDSC is actually self-sufficient (Adam)

Centralised decision making was not stopped by the leadership and skills training. It was continued with specific village competition (Chapter 5) to assess the VDSC and its achievement in managing the village. The assessment was made based on seven criteria outlined by the central government, specifically the MRRD (Chapter 5, p.119).

So each village will be evaluated based on ADSIM criteria, and to determine whether they success or not. So, it means, if the village failed to fulfil the criteria, then there are considered not success... (Salleh)

We can say the village is success when it can participate in the village competition which they need to follow all ADSIM aspects...The seven evaluation criteria outlined in ADSIM is actually comprehensive, it has touched on education, religion, patriotism, economy and these are good criteria (Ishak)

We use ADSIM criteria to evaluate the village. I think the seven elements outlined in ADSIM criteria are pretty good. If we didn't have this guideline, we tend to evaluate based on our own assumption and our own rough eyes. So, ADSIM criteria has a very detailed evaluation, so it's easy for us to assess the development of the village based on the pointer that they received (Harun)

According to the public official interviewees, these seven requirements were considered to be important elements that each village needed to achieve to qualify them to be participants and to be winners.

...all these villages need to fulfil seven aspects from the ADSIM and yes, there are high percentages that the villages can achieve the seven criteria...(Ayob)

...if the village has all seven criteria, then it is good for them to participate and we assumed they are ready (Ishak)

Nevertheless, these seven criteria were developed without any consideration of the capabilities and nature of the village. That means that not all villages were capable of producing and achieving all seven criteria because they were different in terms of geography, social structure, power relations, culture and belief. This has shown that the centralised decision making was made not to guide the villages rather to suit the limited resource allocation by the government. Sometimes villages were also selected based on the 'favouritism' of district officers

...at CDD, our movers will propose the name, but before anything, the movers will present to the DO and penghulu first. It's because DO also concern about his name, of course he will choose villages that fulfil all ADSIM aspects (Ishak)

In practice, this competition was a further means to restrict the resource distribution of government to the local level. It required villages to compete and the resources were varieties and most luxurious one was the start-up capital and various machines were provided for the winners.

...this programme [village competition] is open to every village. If the VDSC wants to participate, they must make sure they are ready, then they must make sure they can gather villagers to participate in the activity (Ishak)

When asked about the selection of the village for the competition, the interviewees responded that they had authority to select the village. The basis of the selection was not consensus among the officials. Different government agencies have different methods of selection, for example the KEDA official stated that

Each district has their own strength, and they [*penghulu* and officials] will send their nomination form. The *penghulu* and the officials will identify which village has potential to enter the competition... We [official] also will look the readiness of the VDSC, and we will check the condition of the village for example, whether they have many social problems or not. So basically, before we nominate the village, we'll look the seven ADSIM criteria whether it existed in the village (Ishak)

This shows that, despite the fulfilment of the seven criteria, the readiness and less problematic nature of villages were also becoming factors for the village to be selected.

In contrast, the approach used by the CDD officer to select villages was quite autocratic. The selection of the villages to participate in the competition was entirely top-down and no discussions were held with the villagers.

I don't care whether they wanted that programme or not, they have to accept it. So the local villagers need to cooperate with each other and they also need to know how to cooperate with government agencies...the selection of the village was made based on 'blind selection', [and that for him], we need to order them to participate. This concept of order and rule must be used (Harun)

The village competition approach was portrayed by the government as way to facilitate citizens' participation in their own development. It was considered desirable because it could bring many benefits to the villagers. However, the village competition approach was not actually to encourage public participation because no opportunities were given to the public to plan and develop their own programme which might increase their standard of living. The village competition was 'designed' by the government based on its own requirements and understanding.

The discussion above has shown that the 'pre-decided' programme and centralised decision making were the two main features of the GDW's implementation at village level. Although the implementation of the GDW was intended to encourage the participation and empowerment of local villagers,

it was a very different matter in practice. It was found in both approaches to implementation that the CDD officers had authority and dominance over the implementation of the GDW. The participation of local villagers was therefore designed and directed on the basis of the CDD officer's perspective and not that of the local people.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted why and how the GDW was introduced and implemented on the ground, based on the macro- and meso-level perspectives. The first section of this chapter has shown that the introduction of the GDW was shaped by the aim of the government to 'decentralise' the decision making to the local people. This was witnessed through the 'transfer of authority', 'power transfer' and self-independence. Despite all of the rhetoric, in reality decentralisation of decision making to the local villagers never existed. This was largely due to the fact that control was still held by the central government and decisions were still made by the policy makers and implementers. In turn, the local villagers were never been given opportunities to participate in decision making process on their economic and development matters. 'Transfer of authority' has discussed the rhetoric of central government to share the power with the state and local level. In reality this was never happened. The process of decentralisation has continued with the exploration of 'power transfer' to the local villagers. This included the power to plan, decide and control their economic and development affairs. This result was also similar to what have been found in the concept of self-independence. Self-independence was proposed as one of the means to decentralise decision making to the local villagers. However, this mechanism was not intentionally to provide decision making power to the villagers, rather it was used to reduce the central government financial burden by transferring the responsibility to develop the village to the villagers.

The second section further discussed how the GDW had been implemented at a local level. Its implementation was found to be 'pre-decided' and centralised

decision making. As a 'pre-decided' programme it was found that the policy implementers were sceptical about local villagers because they had described the local villagers as 'bad', 'poor', 'negative' and 'no initiative'. In turn, they believed that the local villagers must change their negative attitudes. This had resulted in the introduction of the *ABC* characteristics in order to change local villagers' mentality and attitude. In a similar vein, the centralised decision making was found as one of the means to implement the programme and this was a continuation of the first feature; the 'pre-decided' programme. Largely due to the perceived poor attitude and acceptance of local villagers towards the GDW, government has decided that this can be solved through training and development skills of the VDSC members. This programme however did not involve all villagers, rather it only involved the VDSC members. This certainly means that the implementation of the GDW on the ground benefited only a small group of villagers. Their domination of the policy implementation was clearly apparent at village level. Therefore, based on these findings, it is necessary to evaluate what kind of participation was being shaped based on the macro- and meso-level considerations. The next chapter presents two case studies in order to understand how the local villages understood the idea of participation in decision making.

Chapter 8

Public Participation in Decision Making in Cemerlang and Maju Villages

Introduction

The first case study discussed in this chapter addresses public participation in Cemerlang village. It begins with a discussion of the economic and political complexion of this village. The former provides the context for explaining the economic status of the rural people and assessing their ability to participate in decision making in the rural development programme. This is followed by a discussion of the politics of the village administrative structure which is considered to play an important role in the implementation of the GDW Programme. This helps to explain public participation in the programme under the key themes of patronage, power and control. The second part of this chapter discusses the second case study at Maju village, which was a less actively engaged village in the GDW. The village's economic and political profile provide a platform for explaining features which encouraged or discouraged local people from participating in the GDW. Finally, this chapter illuminates the extent of public participation, drawing again on Arnstein's ladder (Chapter 4) and several important features of the village that were found: an autocratic leader, undemocratic administrative body and undemocratic lead public official.

The government has perceived case study one as an actively participative village and case study two as less participative in the GDW. A modified version of Arnstein's ladder was used to understand the current context of the study. Both of these case studies were based on three months in the field. In case study one (*Cemerlang* village), the interviews were conducted with twenty-

three respondents (including village headmen and secretary), but three interviews were discarded because one of the respondent's answers was not related to the research questions and the other two respondents stopped in the middle of the interview. In case study two (*Maju* village), the interviews were conducted with twenty-one respondents (including the village headmen), however two interviews were discarded because the respondent's answers were not related to this research. In total, 39 respondents were interviewed from both villages (Chapter 6). The findings show that neither case study demonstrated any significant participation let alone empowerment. In case study one villagers were not engaged in decision making, whereas case study two provided evidence that the villagers were not only disengaged but were actually excluded from decision making. In Chapter 9 these findings will be analysed in more detail in relation to the political economy perspective.

The economic and political background in Cemerlang village

Cemerlang village is situated in Kedah state, which is called the 'rice bowl' or *Jelapang Padi*. The village is one of the well-recognised GDW villages in Kedah state. There are some 60 houses in the village and it is adjacent to two other villages which have larger populations and occupy larger areas. In the village, several facilities are apparent, such as a community hall, a kindergarten, a mosque, a paved village street, street lamps, a properly functioning drainage system, running water and electricity and it is also near to schools. Many of the villagers could be seen using cars and motorcycles as modes of transportation. The villagers have access to a small town in their area, *Padang Serai*.

Economically, Cemerlang village depends on paddy cultivation as its main source of income. Due to its geography, its small size and the fact that it is surrounded by the paddy, the land of this village is suitable primarily only for paddy cultivation and there is very little land which is suitable for any other types of farming. The majority of the villagers work as paddy cultivators and farmers and a few of them work as public officials. Most of the people involved

in working the paddies are men and this may be due to the need for heavy physical work. Paddy cultivation involves several processes, from seed selection to post-harvesting. Commonly, each paddy will be cultivated twice; early and then again at the end of the year.

The differential in levels of income was apparent between paddy cultivators because those villagers who owned a paddy field were richer than those who rented one from other villagers. This was because those who own do not have to pay rent and those who pay rent have to deduct this from their income. Sometimes, the return from paddy cultivation was not high and in more extreme times the paddy cultivators face total loss. This has happened as a result of flood, insect attack, rodents, weeds and diseases. To get a high yield from a paddy, additional nutrients must be added to the soil and this, of course, requires some capital.

Socially, the villagers valued cooperation among themselves and they had high feeling of solidarity. This had been embedded for a long time and instilled by their ancestors. Most of the time, the village activities such as the *gotong-royong* and wedding reception are done together. The villagers were very prepared to work together because their principle is that they were all friends and relatives. However, most of these activities were directed by the village development and security committee (VDSC) members.

Politically speaking, the VDSC is the main village administrative body (as at 2018). All other village associations come under the VDSC; for example, the wedding reception association, the Malaysia Microcredit Organisation (AIM), *Khairat Kematian*, MADA and the *Pinggiran Mangkuk* association. The majority of the members of these associations are also VDSC members. The VDSC consists of a leader, a secretary and several members with specific portfolios. The leader and the secretary are appointed by the local UMNO branch (the political party). The leader must originate from and live in the village, whereas the secretary must come from the local people but can live outside the village. Although the leader plays an important role, he is assisted by several VDSC

members. The VDSC members are appointed by the leader and the secretary. Under the VDSC administrative structure, there are several portfolios such as development, security, finance, economy and investment, social and culture, education and innovation, religion and civic, welfare and well-being, youth, sport and recreation, ICT and communication, women's welfare, health and cleanliness, environment and cheerfulness.

This section has discussed economic activity, social activity and the village's administrative structure in order to understand the basic conditions of the rural villagers. The following section addresses the level of public participation.

Participation and empowerment in Cemerlang village

The level of public participation was assessed against Arnstein's ladder. In practice, there were various instances of involvement by local people in village economic and development activities, but none of them were considered as participation by or empowerment of the local people. On the modified version of the ladder, three key features were found in this village: patronage, power and control. It was also shown that Arnstein's ladder was of limited value as an explanatory tool to show the lack of public participation in decision making, an issue which is discussed fully in the next chapter.

Patronage

Patronage was defined as a 'patron/client' relationship between the CDD officer and the local leader. The ability of the local leader to negotiate and engage actively with power holders (in this case the CDD officer) is an example of Arnstein's category of *partnership*, which is the third highest rung of public participation. However, although it was high on Arnstein's ladder, this case study showed the downside of *partnership*. In practice, there was no participation or empowerment of local people. This was due to the key role of the CDD officer and his/her close relationship with the VDSC, which actually

disengaged the villagers from the decision making process. So the partnership was not democratic but elite-based.

The CDD officer is described as a person who has authority and influence over local people. It is he/she who represents the link between villagers and the CDD in the implementation of the GDW. The linkage was explained by Badrul, a VDSC member, who said that 'the CDD officer will inform us [the VDSC] if the CDD has any new activities or programmes'. The key role played by the CDD officer was evidenced by the selection of this village to participate in the ADSIM competition (Chapter 5, p.119). Siti stated that 'the CDD officer comes frequently to our village. He has nominated this village to participate in the competition'. This indicated that with his authority as a CDD officer, he had nominated the village to participate in a local people's economic programme without any consideration of the limitation on their part.

Moreover, the villagers were led by the CDD officer to believe that their village had been chosen because it was 'easy to manage' and that 'they were good in terms of cooperation'. Zulaika, a villager, stated that the cooperation and the communal activities which were planned and carried out in their village were always successful. This therefore had been a strong reason for the CDD officer to choose this village. However, this was, different from what the villagers believed. The selection of the village by the CDD officer was actually due to the key performance index (KPIs) which they had to fulfil and not to the reasons stated by the villagers. Likewise, not everyone was interested in the GDW. Fatimah, one of the VDSC members, complained that her life had been very busy since the village had participated in the ADSIM competition. Siti, one of the VDSC members, said that there were some local people who had not agreed about participating in the GDW, but her daughter-in-law, who was also a VDSC member, had persuaded the local people to participate in the programme: 'she was very eager because her parents' village had won the competition, and additionally she's also the CDD officer. So she persuaded the villagers and the committee to participate and we all agreed with her

suggestion'. This suggested that decision making was concentrated in the people who had experience and knowledge.

The patronage was also due to a close relationship which had been established with the VDSC in this village. This close relationship was evidenced by the assistance shown by the CDD officer. Nazmi, the VDSC leader, explained that the CDD officer 'undertook the whole application process to enter my village in the ADSIM competition'. He added that the CDD officer knew him very well because of his position as the VDSC leader. In village life, the VDSC leader is respected not only among the villagers but also among government officers. Due to that relationship, it was normal for the VDSC to follow the instructions of the CDD officer and do whatever activities are asked of them. This 'loyalty' towards the CDD officer was confirmed by Fatimah, a VDSC member, who said 'we kept telling ourselves that the CDD had chosen us, so we should not overlook that'. This loyalty in following the instructions of the CDD officer was also commented on by Badrul, a VDSC member. He stated that as members of the VDSC, they always wanted to make sure that every time the CDD officer invited them to participate in any programme, he and his members would comply with that request because they did not want to make the CDD officer feel disappointed with their village. This kind of action discounted the involvement of other villagers.

Whilst this relationship was beneficial for the VDSC, it was not so for the villagers. Only those who knew the CDD officer could establish a relationship. This was, however, out of the reach of the ordinary villagers because the CDD officer only dealt with any matters with the VDSC and its leader and not with the villagers. Siti pointed out that 'if there's something to work on, the agencies will call him [the VDSC leader]...Usually, the top people will inform him about everything first, before his committee members', and of course this statement indicated that the villagers would be the last people to hear about any final decisions which had been agreed among the VDSC members without any consideration by the villagers. With the influence of the CDD officer and

the restricted opportunities to establish a relationship, it was impossible for the villagers to become involved in the decision making process.

Power and Control

Power and control can be discussed together. On Arnstein's ladder, citizen control is the highest rung of public participation; this means that the citizens have power and control over whatever they do. In village life the government assumed that rural people must have power and control to decide on economic and development issues which affect their lives. Whilst some involvement of people was found in this case study, in practice, none of the involvement was considered as empowerment because the power was concentrated among a select group of people - the VDSC members and not the villagers.

The VDSC is a formal institution which is recognised by the government to represent local people and it is an authoritative body responsible for making decisions on behalf of villagers. However, it is not a democratic body and decisions in this village were made based on the VDSC members' beliefs and support for the government rather than on villagers' beliefs. For example, Badrul, a VDSC member, argued that everything which was developed by the government was good and therefore he said that the villagers should support it. He added that 'if we don't participate in the programme, we know nothing, and that means that we'll become very narrow minded'. Abdul, a VDSC member, added that participation in the programme was good because it could build a network with government agencies. This indicated that, using its power, the VDSC had more or less doctinated the villagers to support the government programme.

With all the information in their hands, most of the VDSC members believed that the GDW would provide a lot of opportunities for the villagers, especially in economic activities. As a VDSC member, Badrul believed that the Programme encouraged 'the community to produce community products based on our own niche. For example, within this village, we have people who are

making traditional cookies, so we need to strengthen this activity in order to make everybody involved and get benefit from it'. Sharina agreed with this: 'GDW is actually a programme which is intended to bring the local people together in order to create businesses which can generate income and the committee members need to be involved if they want to see the village develop'. This indicated that the main understanding among VDSC members was about improving the economic activities of the villagers by participating in the GDW and its members seemed to be mainly concerned about their own undemocratic power. Whilst the interest of the VDSC members was to make sure that the village could generate income to improve the lives of the villagers, the villagers themselves had different views of economic activities as promoted in the GDW. Atikah pointed out that it was impossible for the village to increase the living standard of villagers through economic activity because 'the village is actually very small. For example, in order to breed any animal, space is quite limited. This village is full of people'. Bashirah shared this concern about the limitations of the village in order to participate in the economic activities encouraged by the Programme:

...we can't do much in terms of economic activity. Most of the villagers work as paddy planters and rubber tappers; the village is small and there is no unused land.

In another example, some villagers were appointed to hold positions in village activities without being asked first. The same thing also happened to Chempaka, a VDSC member (before this she was only a villager), who said that her appointment to the education bureau was actually decided by the VDSC: 'when I knew that I had been appointed, whether I liked it or not, I had to perform the duty because it was considered as official'. In village life, once a villager is appointed by a leader (in this case the VDSC), it is not appropriate for him/her to refuse that appointment. So, after being appointed, Chempaka had to perform her duty and she said that she felt very stressed after the appointment. This shows that the villagers had very limited opportunities to speak out and represent themselves. This was confirmed by Saidatul, who pointed out that

Usually, the VDSC and the leader will have a monthly meeting. The meeting is between them only and it does not involve the villagers; later, they will inform us about the decisions that they have made. They will send their representative to inform the villagers...All these activities are decided by the committee members. They arrange everything.

This situation relates to the accessibility which local people had to offer their ideas and voices to the VDSC members. The GDW provides opportunities for individuals to take control of their decision making, but at the same time it is only up to the individuals who hold positions in the VDSC. Zuraidah confirmed this: 'the VDSC leader and his committee members decide on everything. Usually, they will call us to a meeting if they want to organise an activity which requires a crowd'. So power only allowed empowerment for those who were actively involved as VDSC members. This is totally different from the citizen power described on Arnstein's ladder. From this case study, it can be seen that power existed only among a select group of people who usually controlled the resources of the village. Thus, the GDW had not achieved the empowerment of villagers because it was dominated by a small group of people: the VDSC. This concentration of power brought about the disempowerment of the villagers.

Control, on the other hand, was only exercised by the VDSC leader; and it was top-down control. Although control is high on Arnstein's ladder, it was low in this case because the villagers did not have any control over decisions. Decision making was controlled by the VDSC leader as can be understood from the task delegation and participation process. Although the control exercised by the VDSC leader was admirable in certain respects, it did not provide any vestige of bottom-up control by the villagers.

In terms of task delegation the VDSC leader decided everything for the villagers. Tasks were not assigned on a voluntary basis or on the capabilities of the villagers but were dictated by the VDSC leader. This was because the VDSC leader assumed that he knew everybody's capability. For him, the local

villagers needed to be guided because the levels of education of the local people were different and low:

So to handle these people and to get them to participate, I give them a task which suits them, such as being on the security bureau. Then I'll guide him in how to perform that task, for example, the neighbourhood watch.

For example, one villager, Ramli, said that, 'I can remember when he [the VDSC] appointed me to become leader of the environmental bureau'. Ramli's appointment was made during a VDSC meeting. He was not invited to the meeting but the meeting decided to appoint him as environmental leader.

This statement indicates that the villagers had no control over deciding what kinds of task they wanted to do. The VDSC leader was considered to be a person who knew everything compared with the villagers because, as Badrul stated, 'all problems or complaints must be directed first to the VDSC leader'. This shows that the leader was regarded as having the ability to solve people's problems.

In other respects control was also witnessed through the leader's action to participate in any programme which could bring funding to the village. Nazmi, the VDSC leader, stated that 'all of us believe that when there is any competition, we will make sure that we participate'. There was no channel for the villagers to express their disagreement or to make suggestions about the programme. Furthermore, Saidatul showed how the VDSC leader exercised his control over the villagers:

...we all participated by joining in any activity which we were told about by the VDSC leader and his committee members. For example, if they wanted to start any activity, if he says morning, we'll go out in the morning. Everyone obeys his decision.

Everyone obeyed instructions given by the VDSC leader. This indicates that the villagers were passive recipients.

Despite the GDW rhetoric this case study revealed that there were no elements of participation or empowerment of villagers. Even though there was involvement of villagers, they were disengaged from the decision making process. This was due to the patronage and the strong power and control exercised by the VDSC in the village. This finding contrasts with Arnstein's ladder of public participation (Chapter 9). Based on the findings of this case study, the ladder failed to capture the role played by small but powerful actors in village life which hindered the participation and empowerment of the villagers. In practice, therefore, in this case the GDW had not facilitated public participation but instead had strengthened the power of the VDSC.

The economic and political background in Maju village

Maju village is one of the GDW villages and is situated in Kedah state. It is situated near to Alor Setar a developed city with many high-rise buildings. Even so, this village and several others near to it are considered as rural areas because their main source of income comes from agricultural activities. Not only that, the village houses are built along a river and it is surrounded by paddy fields. Along that river there are two other villages. The total houses in the village were approximately 172. Most of the villagers work as paddy cultivators and a few work in the public or private sectors.

In its economy the village was considered as less actively engaged in participation in the GDW and most of the villagers were employed; only a few of them were without work. The main source of income for the villagers comes from paddy cultivation and related activities. Some of the interviewees stated that when they were not working in the paddy field, they went to the river to catch fish for their own consumption, but they still depended very much on paddy cultivation. Many of the interviewees stated that they rented the paddy fields from landlords under a system known as *pajakan*. That meant that the landlords received most of the income and were consequently rich people. As a result, the net income of the villagers was quite small and only enough for their own consumption; not much was left for saving. Sometimes they grew

vegetables for sale but this did not generate much income. Farming activity was actually for those villagers who had extra or unused land because there was limited land there and most of it was fully occupied by residential houses. In addition, there was a time when the rainy season came, when most of the villagers had experienced total loss of their paddy activity due to flooding which had occurred in Kedah state.

There were many poor people in the village and only a few of them had university level education. The ambition of those who had higher levels of education was to leave the village and work in the city. The rest of them led a survival-level life. The village infrastructure was also moderate, with many holes in the paved village street, no community hall, no clinic and no other infrastructure. The basic facilities such as water and electricity were provided by the government. Many of the houses were built of wood and some had a combination of wood and brick. The main mode of transportation was motorcycles although some of the villagers owned cars.

In terms of social activities, most of the programmes were related to religious activities, but there were a few other programmes which has been organised such as communal activities and *gotong-royong*. The villagers felt that it was necessary for all of them to work together. This could be done through cooperation and through wedding reception activities. This included improving their village street which was accessed by everyone. In this activity, they were also willing to contribute their money and energy to ensure any activity can be implemented successfully.

In term of politics, in Maju village the village administrative structure was a bit more complex than in Cemerlang village. In this village, there were two institutions which played an important role in deciding on village matters, for example, the VDSC and the mosque. Both of these were very important to the local people, especially the mosque. On the one hand, the VDSC consisted of fifteen members, including the leader. Formally, its function was to manage the village and channel information to the government. Its members were also

appointed at the local UMNO (the political party) branch meeting and the selection was actually made by the VDSC leader. The VDSC was one of the institutions in this village which was supposed to play a role in managing the village. Nevertheless, the existence of the VDSC was not known widely by the people. The local people only appeared to know one key person, the VDSC leader. On the other hand, the role of the mosque was well recognised by the local people compared with the VDSC. It was considered to be an important institution by the local people because it implemented various programmes throughout the year. The mosque was led by several committee members who had been elected by the local people; whereas the VDSC institution's jurisdiction only covered one village, the mosque's institutional jurisdiction covered three villages, including this one. This meant that the mosque not only covered three villages but also that its members were elected from all three villages. The head of a mosque is known as an *imam* and he is supported by a *muazzen*; they were appointed by the Sultan of Kedah (religious matter) and the Kedah state religious department. The rest of the members were elected at mosque elections.

This section has outlined the economic, social and political circumstances of the village. The standard of living of the villagers was not high and they were many poor people in this village.

Participation and empowerment in Maju village

This section discusses the level of local people's participation in the GDW setting the various levels against Arnstein's ladder of participation. Despite various instances of the involvement of villagers, it was found that there was no actual participation or empowerment of local people. This can be explained by several important features of the village: an autocratic leader, undemocratic administrative body and undemocratic lead public official.

Autocratic leader

The autocratic role played by the VDSC leader had disempowered the villagers from participating in their own development. A village meeting which is supposed to get input, feedback and suggestions from villagers had never been organised. Azmin, a villager, stated that 'so far we haven't had any village meeting. Nothing of the kind' and he added that a VDSC leader is supposed to take any issues in this village to the top people. According to Azmin, the VDSC leader had done nothing to discuss village affairs with the villagers. Likewise, most of the interviewees stated that no village meeting had ever been held in the village. However, one villager, Salmi, stated that there were only a few people who would be called to a village meeting: 'as you can see from the entrance to our village, there are a few houses near the VDSC leader's house. Most of the time, people from these houses will go to a meeting'. This was agreed with by Fauziah, one person who did usually go to a meeting: 'I went to a village meeting. A meeting is usually held when there's any issue that needs to be discussed'. The selection of Fauziah to participate in the village meeting showed bias by the VDSC leader because a village meeting should be open to all villagers to attend. Gee, another villager stated that the participation of all the villagers in a village meeting was important:

In my opinion, it is good if we can have a meeting with all the villagers because we live in this village as a community. So, by having a meeting we can know the opinions and ideas of each of the villagers. But this just doesn't happen in this village.

Gee's statement indicates that the villagers were willing to participate in a village meeting; it would give them an opportunity to offer their ideas but it had never been organised. Jamilah also showed her interest in participating in a village meeting: 'I would like to join if they wanted to organise it'. This situation indicates that, in practice, the VDSC leader was an autocratic leader and thus hindered the empowerment of the villagers.

The autocratic leadership style can also be perceived from the approach to decision making. The VDSC leader was the only person who had authority in the village. Zaki, the VDSC leader, stated that he had decided to not implement the GDW on his own and not based on discussion among the villagers:

I think the GDW is a programme to increase the standard of living of the villagers. So, when I look at this village, support from the villagers was small, so I didn't implement it. Actually, from my observation, this village is a little bit slow, the main issue is because of the political difference. The villagers in this village are mostly from the opposition party.

Zaki's statement reveals the autocratic approach which had disempowered villagers from participating in the economic development of their village. The villagers were not given any information or any channel through which to provide their feedback. However, Zaki argued that he had already asked his VDSC members but most of them had agreed not to participate in this programme: 'the VDSC members that we appointed didn't agree with this suggestion, they opposed it and didn't want to implement it. So, I followed the majority of them; by right, if they don't support me, I can't do it alone'. Zaki and his VDSC members were autocratic and the decision making was concentrated within this VDSC group only.

In addition, the villagers were not always trusted by the VDSC leader. Zaki argued that 'I'm the VDSC leader and also an UMNO member, so very few people support me because many of the villagers are very negative towards the government' and as an effect, he commented that it was really difficult for him to perform his task as VDSC leader. However, Jamilah, a villager has argued that it was only the VDSC leader who always thought that the villagers did not support him: 'If he wanted to organise anything, I believe that people would support him. Tell me who will refuse to clean the village? Everybody wants to make sure the village is clean, am I right?' This shows that Jamilah, a villager, did not have any negative perception towards him but rather it was the VDSC leader himself who was the one who felt suspicious about the

villagers. The feeling of concern and suspicion shown by the VDSC leader was also shared by Gee: 'he's sometimes afraid to organise or plan anything because he thinks that his plan will not be welcomed by the villagers. He also felt concerned about whether the villagers like him or not'. In effect, the feeling of not being trusted by the VDSC leader excluded the opportunity for the villagers to participate and make decisions.

Finally, the autocratic leadership of the VDSC leader can be illustrated through his rigid actions towards the villagers. Gee, a villager, expressed her frustration with this aspect of the VDSC leader. Gee had twice had her applications rejected by the leader because he just kept saying 'it's difficult' for Gee to receive housing assistance from the government. While he continued to talk about the difficulty, he was clearly making no effort to forward the applications on her behalf. Fazrul, another villager, had had a similar experience. He pointed out that the leader had said the same thing to him, that it was 'very difficult to get assistance from the government'. This rigid action by the leader had demotivated the villagers from getting any assistance from him.

Undemocratic administrative body

In practice, the VDSC was the official administrative body of the village, but the undemocratic approach of the VDSC leader had disempowered the villagers because most of the interviewees stated that the VDSC leader was only concerned about villagers who shared a political interest with him. Hafiz pointed out that the VDSC should refer any problems or issues to the top people, but he never did that: 'actually the main problem is, he's from the government party [the minority party in the village]. So, if they have a meeting, it will be conducted among them only'. Hafiz's statement shows that he was sceptical about the leader's undemocratic approach in helping the villagers. This was confirmed by Ibrahim, who pointed out that the leader would call only his 'followers' to his house if they wanted to discuss anything.

Those who did not share his interest would not be called or involved. Razali also said that the leader was only concerned about his 'followers':

We don't get anything from him. He just concerned about his cronies. He knows that some of the villagers are very poor, but he gives priority to his own people [political allies]. For example, there was a single mother who was very poor and she's actually a PAS member [the opposition party], so she didn't receive the assistance.

He added that when the leader went to a meeting with the top management, he only took his own followers with him: 'I heard that he went to a meeting but he only took his followers' (Razali, a villager). This selective participation made by the leader had had an impact on the villagers who were not in the same party by preventing them from participating and providing information to the government. This had hindered the chances of the villagers to negotiate and determine the direction of their own lives.

As an authoritative body, the VDSC was supposed to play various roles, but it had not done so. For example, Razali stated that the VDSC leader received a high allowance from the government but that he did not perform his job as leader in the village. He further argued that the leader was only concerned about lining his own pocket: 'the VDSC leader is not functioning. He is just concerned about how to fill his own pockets ... Look at the current VDSC leader's house; he has many cars and also many paddy fields'. The inactivity of the leader was not a problem for him because he was politically appointed based on political party. The undemocratic approach of the leader was also evidenced through his favourable decision to help one of his own relatives. Halimah stated that the leader had used his authority to make a favourable decision to put his sister's name forward to receive assistance from the government but had denied Halimah's name. The undemocratic approach of the leader had impacted the capability of the villagers to make decisions and convey their demands to the higher authorities because their right to express their own concerns was denied by the undemocratic approach of the VDSC leader in the village.

Undemocratic lead public official

The undemocratic lead public official refers to the undemocratic exercise of power by the CDD officer in the implementation of the GDW. Each village is assigned one CDD officer who has to monitor and advise each village under his/her supervision, especially about the Programme. It was explained in Chapter 7 that only villages which had active VDSCs were commonly entertained by the CDD officer. In this village however, there were many restrictions. It was therefore very difficult for the villagers to improve their lives, especially in economic activities, which was what government wanted to achieve through the GDW and this problem made it easy for them to be ignored by the CDD officer. Fazrul, a villager has argued that it was difficult for the village to participate in any economic activities because the village was very small and had limited land. Most of the space has been used for housing development. This nevertheless was not accepted by the CDD officer as each village throughout Malaysia was expected to fulfil several common criteria which had been developed for them.

The majority of the interviewees agreed that their village was not suitable for any beautification or economic activity because of the limitations which they faced in terms of the goals of the GDW. Ibrahim was very frustrated because he was aware that if his village was given an opportunity to participate in the Programme, they might encounter various problems. Their limitations were not getting any attention from the designated CDD officer. The majority of the interviewees confirmed that no single CDD officer ever came to their village to observe their problems. In a more extreme way, Zaki, the VDSC leader, pointed out that the CDD officer had not come to the village because 'a government agency saw that this village didn't have any potential to be developed, so that's why they ignored our village'.

Gee stressed that she had never heard about the CDD officer coming to her village but stated that 'MADA is one agency that I know has come in, for example they have provided machine assistance to those who applied for it'.

Gee's statement suggests that another agency had come to the village, but that agency had only a specific function and was not for community development, which was the CDD officer's role. The lead public official had created many problems for the village. Ibrahim, another villager made a comparison between his village and other villages and was puzzled why 'there is no external assistance that comes to this village...I've heard about the health agency going to another village area, but not to our village'. At some point, it was acknowledged that the CDD officer had come to the village only to organise a cookery class, but it was held at a nearby residence and not actually in the village. Halimah stated that 'the CDD never come in. The CDD officer did come here when they wanted to organise a cookery class and teaching at the kindergarten, but that's all'. In a more extreme comment, Yusof claimed that 'the agency just comes to this village to see the VDSC leader only. But when the general election is approaching, they will come and visit us'. This suggests that the CDD officers had their own intentions and behaved selectively in performing their role. Thus, the undemocratic lead public official of the CDD officer had disempowered the villagers and hindered their participation.

Conclusion

The first section of this chapter discussed the case study in Cemerlang village. This village had a moderate level of economic activity with most of the villagers being dependent on paddy cultivation. The village also had a sound administrative structure and its development was fully supported by government agencies. Even so, there was no sign of public participation or empowerment in the village because of several factors such as patronage, power and control, which cannot be explained by using Arnstein's ladder of participation (Chapter 9). The key role played by the CDD officer and the CDD's connection with the VDSC revealed the strong patronage in the village. The VDSC also dominated the decision making in the village because it had strong official power compared with the other villagers. This led to top-down control being imposed by the VDSC leader.

The second section of the chapter discussed the second case study, Maju village. It started with an overview of the economic, social and political circumstances of the village. It was shown that the villagers were poor and that their source of income came from agricultural activity. In terms of politics, village administration was dominated by the VDSC and the mosque committee. In terms of participation, this case study showed its lack in the GDW because of an autocratic leader, undemocratic administrative body and undemocratic lead public official. Autocratic leadership was shown in the way that the VDSC leader excluded villagers from participation and empowerment. Undemocratic administrative body suggested that the VDSC members in this village had their own agenda and undemocratic public official was shown to have hindered the empowerment of the villagers by the role played by the CDD officer, who was very rigid and selective in the way that he chose to assist the village. The next chapter integrates the findings presented in Chapters 7 and 8 with the earlier literature based chapters.

Chapter 9

Public Participation as a Strategy for Rural Development

Introduction

The previous analyses on theories of development (Chapter 2) and rural development (Chapter 3) have shown that public participation and empowerment (Chapter 4) in decision making became a solution to improve the economic conditions of the rural poor. The previous two chapters explored this process at the macro, meso and micro levels. Chapter 7 revealed the motivations of policy makers behind the GDW Programme to facilitate public participation and how it has been implemented on the ground. However, both village case studies discussed in Chapter 8 revealed that the rhetoric of public participation was misleading because of the failure to address the social relational dimensions and the failure of the central government to pursue policy that guarantee public participation.

The main aim of this chapter is to bring together the previous analyses. It links the theoretical exploration of development theories, rural development, participation and power to the empirical findings. The first section discusses the key findings from Chapter 7 and relates them to the theories of development (Chapter 2) and rural development (Chapter 3). This reveals the motivation of the government in politicising public participation as a way of devolving responsibility to the local people rather than engaging them as active participants. The second section discusses the findings from the case studies, as set at in Chapter 8, and relates them to the discussion of participation and power in Chapter 4. It shows evidence of lack of actual participation and empowerment in the two case studies and points out that even though local people were involved to some extent in the rural

programme, none of this amounted to active participation, still less empowerment. The third section discusses the main philosophical foundation of the thesis, the political economy perspective, in relation to the findings, and the conclusions of Chapters 7 and 8 are integrated to address the final research question: 'How far did the GDW Programme succeed as a strategy to facilitate public participation in decision making'. This chapter concludes with a consideration of a proposed model for public participation in decision making in rural development and how this helps to answer the main research question of this thesis.

The Decentralisation of Responsibility

This section discusses the findings presented in Chapter 7 in order to answer the first two research questions: 'Why was the Visionary Capability Movement Programme introduced in Malaysia?' and 'How had the GDW Programme been implemented on the ground?' The findings showed that the formulation of the Programme and the approach to its implementation were decided by the central government, and it can be concluded that: first, the introduction of the GDW to facilitate public participation was the result of the decentralisation of responsibility originating from the underlying neo-liberal policy which started it. The neo-liberal policy which advocates limited state intervention (financial assistance and tied resources) to ensure growth and efficiency was the main motivating force behind the GDW in Malaysia; second, the implementation of the programme was highly top-down.

The political and economic development policy was shaped by neo-liberalism pursued at the national level, characterised by the privatisation of state enterprises, new public management, the liberalisation of trade, the vision to be a high-income nation and the economic transformation programme (Haque, 1999) which was being robustly implemented by the government. For example, two common values of the neo-liberal policy which have been promoted by the IGOs in Malaysia are limited state intervention and the maximisation of agricultural productivity. First, it was clearly stated in policy documents that

the government encouraged the participation of the private sector in order to limit the role of the government in the economic sector.

The public sector will no longer play an expansionary role in spearheading economic growth. It will, however, continue to provide leadership through its efforts in creating a more suitable environment and climate in which the private sector can play an enhanced role of generating growth through increased competition, efficiency, initiative, and innovation in the production and marketing of goods and services for domestic and foreign markets (Government of Malaysia, 1986, p.4)

In line with the Government's policy of reducing the size of the public sector and improving its efficiency and productivity ...several privatization programmes were undertaken...these included partial or total divestment of several Government companies, corporatization of selected government departments, leasing of several government facilities to the private sector (Government of Malaysia, 1990, p.72)

Second, the effect of limited state intervention can be seen in the agricultural sector where instead of investing more, the government withdrew the subsidies for the sector and encouraged the maximisation of agricultural productivity with lower costs

The focus of development will be in areas which have the competitive edge and offer higher income returns... In order to increase the competitiveness and sustainability of the agriculture sector, the Government will, among other things, examine the possibility of withdrawing subsidies, particularly in areas where production costs are on the increase (Government of Malaysia, 1996, p.225)

This was not surprising because the decision was made based on advice and financial support from the World Bank

The first National Agricultural Policy was adopted following the advice of the World Bank on farm efficiency and income equity. The policy aimed to harmonize and direct the efforts of all stakeholders involved in agriculture based on the concept of raising productivity to maximize net farm incomes (World Bank Group, 2019, p.25)

Capital assistance to Malaysia takes various forms, namely, project loans from multilateral sources, particularly the World Bank (Government of Malaysia, 1986, p.251)

Due to the central level neo-liberal policy that encouraged the maximisation of agricultural productivity, the policy for rural areas also shifted and has 'tended to provide more ground for a free market approach' which focused on competitiveness and higher productivity (Nghah, 2012, p.6).

Agricultural development will focus on productivity improvements through more efficient and greater utilization of agricultural resources...re-orienting production methods to improve competitiveness in the context of a more liberal market environment (Government of Malaysia, 1996, p.245)

... [the role of the World Bank] is not simply to provide financial support to poverty alleviation projects but to develop an institutional and policy framework to enable Malaysians eventually to design and implement antipoverty programs ... the Bank is helping the Government to develop further its programs and projects for reducing poverty. The proposed project is a significant step towards establishing an effective institutional framework in Malaysia (World Bank, 1980b, p.6)

...external agencies such as the World Bank, ADB and the UNDP can play an important role in helping agencies formulate larger and more effective poverty projects. The UNDP State and Rural Development Project, in particular, is in an excellent position to assist in this effort (World Bank, 1980a, p.20)

Responsibility to modernise the rural agricultural sector was assigned to the Ministry of Rural Development (MRD). As such, the MRD introduced a new plan and strategies for rural development (NPSRD) which were driven by market forces:

Rural development must be founded on the optimum and efficient use of resources as determined by market forces. The rural people must be allowed to choose more lucrative activities and, in the long run, enrich themselves ... (INFRA, 1997a)

... restructuring the villages so as to be compatible with both agriculture and modern industry. Fewer and fewer farmers should produce more and more food, thus releasing manpower for an industrial society (Prime Minister's Speech, 1991, p.20)

Consequently, one of the strategies introduced to support the national and rural transformation policy was the GDW Programme with the aim of encouraging local people to be competitive and self-reliant through participation in decision making:

the transformation of rural areas to become attractive, progressive, and profitable will not occur if the village people are not dynamic, creative and participative (INFRA, 1995)

The responsibility for implementing these rural strategies and the GDW Programme was decentralised to the MRD's agencies at state level, such as the Community Development Department (CDD) and Kedah Regional Development Authority (KEDA). With the new functions assigned, specifically, the CDD has been restructured several times to include the rural development function as its new role, whereas before 2000 it had focused on human resource development only (CDD, 2014). Even though the CDD and KEDA were given the authority to implement the programme and share the responsibility with the central government, in reality, the public officials had no authority over the programme because the decentralisation of the task was without 'direct allocation provided under any details or specific activity' (Parliament, House of Representatives, 2010).

The above findings show therefore that the IGOs and their neo-liberal ideas influenced the Malaysian government specifically in economic and development policy. Ideas such as limited state intervention and the maximisation of agricultural productivity were developed at the macro level, implemented by public officials at the meso level and practised by local villagers at the micro level. In practice, however, the policy barely paid attention to either the participation or the empowerment of local people. Chapters 7 and 8 revealed the contrasting motivations between the policy makers and the local people (discussed further in the next section). This is not surprising because the idea of participation in economic activity is a key part of the neo-liberal paradigm (Hickey and Mohan, 2004) and the aim of the policy makers was commonly to reduce public spending on social welfare and to

transfer responsibility for it to communities, including those where the need was greatest (Mayo and Craig, 1995, p.4). The following section addresses the inconsistencies between the real practice of economic development policy and its implementation against the literature set out in the previous chapters.

Administrative decentralisation

Administrative decentralisation was one of the mechanisms used under the neo-liberal policy to reform Malaysia's administration. Its purpose was to delegate responsibility for administration and to redistribute necessary authority (such as state socio-economic development and community development) from the central level to the local level. In practice, the decentralisation of administration was implemented through the concept of public participation in decision making at a local level. This concept was introduced by the government not only to decentralise the responsibility to public officials, but also to encourage local villagers to 'plan, decide and control' their own development through participation in the Programme. In the words of two policy makers

The main purpose of this programme was to give an opportunity for the development from the bottom-up approach rather than the top-down approach. That means we want the involvement of the community members in their own development (Yunus)

Before this, the government provided all the allocation, but when the GDW was introduced, the government wanted an effort from people - the bottom-up approach ... In order to get the allocation from the government, the villages need to demonstrate their own efforts and display their villages (Ayob)

However, in practice the intended decentralisation through the Programme was empty rhetoric. What actually happened was that public officials decided on what 'participation' would look like and what must be achieved by the Programme.

What we want to give to the people is programmes and projects that we have decided based on the budget allocation that we have been given...then we will introduce this programme to the local people (Salleh)

Our target is to make all villages successful and self-managing. When a village is successful and well-managed, it can produce all three capabilities [human, economic and market] (Yunus)

These comments indicate that the GDW Programme was not intended to involve a bottom-up approach but was top-down and this reinforced the centralised power of the government.

Administrative decentralisation was also intended to redistribute authority to some extent. This meant that through the GDW Programme, the authority to develop rural areas was supposed to be transferred to public officials at state and local levels. This can be seen in the roles allocated to the public officials in relation to local people:

The mover [public official] is not the developer and the mover only moves the community. He or she will attend the village development and security committee (VDSC) meeting and will ask the VDSC what they need, so when mover knows what the villagers need, he/she can call the responsible agencies to come to the village (Yunus)

I'm becoming a middle person between the government and the needs of the local people...for example, knowing what they want because we are close to them (Salleh)

So, public officials at state level were vested with the authority to implement the GDW Programme and to share this responsibility with the central government, which effectively meant the redistribution of authority. Nevertheless, in practice, the intended distribution never happened because public officials had no authority to plan and decide on the GDW and, when it came to it, they were never consulted about any changes in the implementation of the programme.

...we will have a problem when a change of leader happens at the ministry level. For example, we had just started with the ADSIM [village competition], but this year it has changed to the *Desa Perdana* award [village competition]. We were just beginning to understand the ADSIM and now we need to change it to *Desa Perdana*. So the change of the officer at the ministry level also will affect the implementation at our level (Ayob)

...whatever we want to implement, we must make sure that we follow what the government wants, and follow the guidelines and qualities that have been decided (Salleh)

Instead of promoting decentralisation, this may be considered as 'deconcentration', the weakest form of administrative decentralisation (Conyers, 2006; Rondinelli, 1981). This supports the argument by Alsop and Norton (2004, p.6) that

the positive association between decentralisation - as a logical of democratisation - and poverty reduction is not yet proven, but many of us continue to advocate fiscal, administrative, and political decentralisation, citing pro-poor growth as our justification

In practice, it meant that the transfer from central government to the public officials at state level was only in terms of the workload, and that the important decisions were still made at the centre, which effectively meant, the continuation of centralisation in the name of decentralisation (Mosse, 1995). This finding shows that administrative decentralisation was merely one of the structural reforms prescribed by the neo-liberal perspective and it was exercised through the implementation of the Programme at local level.

Self-Reliance

The concept of self-reliance was used as a mechanism to make people 'independent' rather than relying on government assistance. For instance,

...local villagers must get rid of the subsidy mentality (relying on support from the government)...[government had provided everything] it is just the people (Salleh)

This programme [the GDW] was developed for local people, for example, in the economic area; the government wants the villagers to produce their own products and this can avoid them being dependent on the government (Sulaiman)

However, the intended 'self-reliance' was not developed to empower local villagers but rather to reduce the central government's responsibility for developing rural areas. In this way, the burden of financing development at local level could be shifted onto the local villagers. Consequently, instead of enhancing the implementation of the Programme, the government actually restricted the allocation of budgets to the local villages.

It is difficult to develop the village when there's no budget allocation from government agencies...the budget allocation is also shrinking. This year, we [public official] didn't receive any budget to implement the GDW (Harun, public official)

...this year, we [public official] didn't have any allocation, not only for the competition, but also for the committee to organise the village competition. We had the order from the ministry, but we didn't receive any budget allocation to implement it...(Salleh, public official)

This means that the introduction of the GDW Programme by means of the self-reliance concept was actually to institutionalise the division of responsibilities advocated from a neo-liberal perspective. This supports Herbert-Cheshire and Higgins's (2004) review of the development literature which concluded that self-reliance and self-help are incrementally embedded in regional and rural development (Higgins, 2002). The development experts also reflected a neo-liberal perspective which put more emphasis on 'capital rather than publics' (Purcell, 2009, p.143). They believed that economic activities could become a source of income for local people and consequently remove them from poverty. In practice, however, public participation is often only a cosmetic exercise concealing the cost-cutting promoted by neo-liberalism (Rahnema, 1992; Woost, 1997). That is, self-reliance and participation are 'a technology of economic liberalisation' (Marsland, 2006, p.69). In line with this, Cornwall (2006, p.71) stated that the whole idea of self-reliance and the participation

which should have been part of it had started to be revised as neo-liberal thinking began to take over the development initiative.

This section had showed that the decentralisation is a sound and effective approach to fostering public participation at the local level (Larson and Ribot, 2004, p.250), but there is less evidence of participation to ‘improve the conditions of the most vulnerable people or as a strategy for change’ (Clever, 2001, p.36). In sum, this section has emphasised that the introduction of the GDW entailed a decentralisation of responsibility but no decentralisation of resources and was underpinned by neo-liberal ideology at the national level.

The Implementation Process

Drawing from the findings, this section explains the implementation problems of the Programme: a top-down approach and lack of understanding of the programme among local officials.

Chapter 7 revealed that the implementation of the Programme, which was supposed to facilitate public participation in decision making, in practice did not match the central government’s rhetoric. All policies were developed and decided at the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development (MRRD) and the public officers at state level were not involved in this formulation process. In turn, the officers have limited power to decide on the implementation of the GDW on the ground. This situation occurred because the local actors were often expected to take on increased responsibilities but were denied the authority to make local decisions (Poteete and Ribot, 2011, p.439). This was clearly explained by one of the officials:

...we must follow the Gantt chart provided by the Ministry [the MRRD], and all the activities must tally with the Ministry’s dates. On the ground, we were given very limited time to prepare all those things but in reality it was not enough...each of the fieldwork tasks [participation activities] takes time.

Instead of letting the officials decide on how to implement the programme, the MRRD decided the what and how entirely on its own. This suggests that the implementation of the GDW was 'a top-down process' (Marsland, 2006, p.65) and it is still subject to a top-down state agenda in the form of the GDW which naively expects communities and individuals to take on responsibilities for their own development at the same time as retaining central control (Taylor, 2007, p.314).

This analysis suggests that the common participation framework (the GDW) was basically developed to ensure that the government remained in control. It is not surprising that the GDW was unlikely to succeed in achieving its stated participatory goals because, although policy makers genuinely wanted to increase community input from both officials and villagers, the programme's structure in terms of the implementation of the participation aim had not been designed to respond to community ideas and suggestions (Eversole, 2011, p.57).

The top-down process then led to the second implementation problem: the lack of understanding of the GDW by the local officials. This became a problem after policy implementers had interpreted and understood the GDW differently from what the central government proposed. Most of the policy implementers such as the Community Development Department (CDD), the Kedah Regional Development Authority (KEDA), the state economic development (BPEN) and the district office (DO) had implemented the Programme based on the fixed criteria used for village competition. Instead of facilitating local villagers to make decision in their own economic and development activities that can improve their standard of living, they have been instructed to fulfil set of targets in the village competition criteria. In practice, these criteria were only guidelines for the officer to select the winning village (Chapter 5) and not facilitating local people to participate in the GDW. As a result, the local villages which do not fulfil the criteria were not taken into consideration for further economic development activities and this further contributed to the

lack of public participation in the GDW. This supports Chambers's (1974, pp.108-109) claim that

participation accentuates inequity [because] it favours those areas which are better able to produce plans and to implement them...participation in development committees can mean that those who are already well-off approve projects and programmes which favour and support those who are already well-off.

This suggests that the local villagers were not given their own freedom and this was largely due to the fact that the officials on the ground were 'sceptical of the feasibility of empowerment-level participation' (Michener, 1998, p.2115).

Overall, the implementation of the GDW was typically defined from the perspective of the implementing agency, which consistently ignored regular instructions to encourage local participation and instead simply reinforced the top-down implementation (Hafner, 1987, p.88; Korten, 1982). This is a typical view and interpretation of implementers which comes from experts trained by the central government (Herbert-Cheshire and Higgins, 2004).

From the discussion above and the evidence presented in Chapter 7, it is clear that the introduction of the GDW reflected neo-liberal ideas which were being promoted by policy makers at the national and international levels. Crucially, this perspective shaped the formulation and implementation of the Programme on the ground. To complicate the issue more, public officers who were responsible for implementing the programme were not under local democratic control because its implementation was highly top-down. Therefore, the 'participation' proposed by the government appears to be only rhetoric intended to justify their actions and the decentralisation of responsibility. Along similar lines, Coelho and Favareto (2008) have described the participation proposed by the government as to a large extent facilitating their own political reproduction. Not only that, but the real reason for decentralisation could be to maintain central control rather than to distribute

power to local communities (McGinn and Street, 1986, p.472). The following section discusses the findings from Chapter 8.

Contributory factors to non-participation in decision making

Before moving on to discuss in detail the contributory factors to non-participation in decision making, it is necessary to provide the contexts of the two case study villages. Comparison between them showed several similarities and differences. On the one hand, both villages were located in rural areas but in different districts, Kota Setar and Kubang Pasu, where the majority of GDW villages are. In terms of leadership, both villages were led by a village headman and VDSC members who were appointed by the government and therefore had a similar political ideology to that of the political party of the central government. In both villages, the main source of income came from agricultural activity such as paddy cultivation and the villagers worked as paddy cultivators with not much income for those who rented their paddy field from a landlord under a system known as *pajakan*. Geographically, both villages were small and had limited areas for economic activity except for paddy cultivation. On the other hand, in term of participation in the GDW Programme, the actively engaged village had participated in various GDW activities and had won several village competitions. For example, this village had once been nominated by the state of Kedah to compete in the national village competition, the *1 Malaysia Prosperous Village Award (ADS1M)*, so this experience had built a close relationship between the VDSC and the CDD officer. However, the less actively engaged village had not been involved in any GDW activities. Instead of participating in the village competitions, the villagers in the less actively engaged village were only engaged in communal activities such as *gotong-royong*, wedding reception cooperation and fixing their village road together. This activity had been conducted voluntarily by the villagers and was not organised by the VDSC members let alone the CDD officer. This village had rarely been visited by the CDD officer and when it had, the officer only visited the headman. Instead of having a close relationship with the CDD officer and the VDSC, this less actively engaged

village had built a good relationship with the local mosque and the mosque institution had conducted various activities compared with the VDSC in the village. In terms of infrastructure, the actively engaged village had a specific community hall for the villagers, but in the less actively engaged village there was no space for them to hold a village meeting because of the lack of a community hall. So the two selected villages had several similarities and differences which were useful for explaining their levels of public participation in the GDW Programme. The next section, discusses the contributory factors to non-participation in decision making.

Chapter 4 discussed typologies of participation, and power and empowerment theories. One of the common approaches to understand and categories participation is Arnstein's ladder. However, this ladder was insufficient to explain the factors that contribute to low participation in the GDW. This was because the ladder only shows different stages of participation but fails to explain how progression through the stages can be facilitated or prevented. Thus it fails to provide an explanation of the reasons why villagers did not participate in decision making in the GDW. This can be explained however using a political economy perspective that has been interpreted through Arendt's, Freire's and Sen's theories of power and empowerment. The findings in Chapter 8 showed that the participation and empowerment of villagers was prevented by several key contributory factors that were closely related to the concepts of power and empowerment. They suggest that the non-participation of local villagers in decision making was due to the existence of unequal power relations, the absence of empowerment, the failure of capability expansion and the absence of understanding of context of political and economic structure of village that shape the understanding of non-participation in decision making in economic development activities. In this section, these four key factors explaining non-participation in decision making will be discussed.

The existence of unequal power relations

From the previous literature reviews and Arnstein's ladder of participation, this lack of participation in decision making was categorised as the lowest rung of the ladder, which indicated that no power was shifted to the public at all, and that they were only required to rubber-stamp and support decisions made by the officials which, in turn, were heavily circumscribed by government policy (Chapter 4). For Arnstein, if local villagers were capable of climbing the ladder and reaching the highest rungs, they were considered to have full control over decision making in that aspect of their lives.

However, an understanding of public participation based on Arnstein's ladder still fails to explain how non-participation in decision making in the case of the GDW happened on the ground, which shows the limitations of the ladder as an explanatory tool. Chapter 8 demonstrated that non-participation in decision making was circumvented by the failure of the local elite (the VDSC and officials) to invite the very poor into the decision making process (Mohan and Stokke, 2000). This was because the power to make decisions such as planning, deciding and implementing the programme was vested in the VDSC. This permitted the strong control of the VDSC and officials in order to prevent villagers from actively participating in the GDW. This supports Alsop and Norton's (2004, p.4) view that 'the imbalances in power relations affect people's capability to make effective choice' in that the opportunity for publics to participate in the GDW pertaining to their economic and development activities was never realised. Thus the GDW which was ostensibly intended to facilitate public participation was in practice shaped by power relations in the village case studies (Cornwall, 2002). This confirms that the existence of power relations between individual local elites contributed to the non-participation of local people in the decision making process (Bardhan, 2002; Cooke, 2004; Kothari, 2001).

Some of the local villagers have stated that they were not involved and were only informed after decisions had been made, for example

The meeting is between them [the VDSC members] only and it does not involve the villagers; later, they will inform us [the villagers] about the decisions that they have made (Saidatul)

The VDSC members will decide any village matter and the participation in the GDW was also decided by them...(Ramli)

The VDSC planned everything. They will discuss among themselves what kind of programme they want to organise (Amirah)

In this case, the VDSC 'distancing community members further' from participating in decision making process (Kamruzzaman, 2020, p.42) and they dominated and controlled the decision making arenas (Ribot, 1993) and indeed this was confirmed through the interviews with VDSC members, for instance

...we [the VDSC] decided among ourselves first...and after we had made the decision we informed the villagers about what we had decided (Badrul)

All of us [the VDSC] believe that when there is any competition, we will make sure that we participate (Nazmi)

The unequal power relations which existed in both case studies confirm Hickey and Mohan's (2004) and Kothari's (2001) claims that decision making will reflect the interests of people who are already powerful. This practical consideration suggests that the redistribution of power from officials to the local people which was supposed to include those who had been previously excluded from any political or economic decision-making (Arnstein, 1969, p.216) never actually happened. Instead, the findings show that the existing power relations at the local level promoted the existing power structures in the villages (Narayanan, 2003).

Additionally, the local elite employed their power by limiting villagers' access to information about the GDW and only made communications with officials available to members of the VDSC. For example, VDSC members stated that

...the official and this village have a good relationship, like the relationship between a father and mother...(Badrul)

[The CDD officer] undertook the whole application process to enter my village in the ADSIM competition...(Nazmi)

The CDD officer comes frequently to our village. He has nominated this village to participate in the competition...(Siti)

As powerful 'gatekeepers' who the public officials had to consult, all the information about the GDW was transmitted to the VDSC and the ordinary villagers had no opportunity to communicate with the officials. As a source of reference for the officials and as the receiver of all information, the VDSC always prioritised the decisions made by officials and not the villagers. So, the committee members who formed the VDSC may have been part of a patrimonial elite, repackaged for the government's purposes. Here, the possession of power by the VDSC indicated that power was concentrated in only a few individuals (the VDSC members). This enabled the VDSC members to strengthen their power in the implementation of the GDW and to dominate the decision making. As such, village elites acted as intermediaries whose interests on behalf of the rural communities which they claimed to represent were entirely false because they could continue to use their position and power to exploit local resources for their own advantage (Kan, 2019, p.148).

The existence of unequal power relations within the villages explains not only the domination by the local elite but also the fact that the decision making in regard to the GDW and its implementation was co-opted to suit the predetermined goals identified by officials (Jones, 2003). This kind of co-option normally favours the local elites and is far from representing the voices of the people. This suggests that the decisions on economic and development issues were made generally to the advantage of the village elites. Consequently, 'exiting' from the participation might be the best option for local people (White, 1996). Gaventa (1998, p.54) explained this situation well: 'communities often found the traditional power holders stepping in to take charge' when they can benefit from a programme.

This situation prevailed in the villages largely due to the resistance of those who traditionally held power (the VDSC members) to sharing it with others (Brett, 2003; Hilhorst, 2003) and the failure to acknowledge the existing power structure (Hore *et al.*, 2020; Kamruzzaman, 2020), as a result, failing to enable the participation and empowerment of local people. This indicates that unequal power relations dominated the villages which cannot be explained by Arnstein's ladder because 'participation is unequal across different sections of society, reflecting the unequal distribution of power and resources in society' (Brodie *et al.*, 2009, p.27). So in the context of the current study, the elites' interests and power relations were hardly visible because 'they are embedded in social and cultural practices' (Cooke and Kothari, 2001, p.14) and only appeared through the lens of the political economy perspective.

The absence of VDSC empowerment by villagers towards collective action

Arendt (1972, p.151) stated that 'power springs up whenever people get together and act in concert' and it is a precondition that allows people to think and act. However, in the case studies, the process of deliberating ideas, think, act and making decisions on the activities that the local villagers were supposed to organise to support the implementation of the GDW was only available to people who were appointed as VDSC members. This confirms Alsop and Norton's (2004) and Mosse and Lewis's (2005) warnings that village-level associations (in this case the VDSC) can facilitate local participation but, on the other hand, they can limit the deliberation of ideas in the entire decision making process and completely disempower local people. In practice, the latter was clearly indicated in both case studies and circumvented the freedom of local villagers to take any initiative or participate in the GDW. For example, the villagers argued that,

If they invite us to join the GDW, I would like to join, but they never ask us (Saiful)

He [the VDSC leader] never asked us, for example, what we want in this village, like paving a street, or what else that we need, but we were asked nothing (Azmin)

Arendt (1970) stated that power and empowerment require people to gather together to identify and discuss problems and to generate ideas to solve them. In this respect, 'power always stands in need of numbers' (1972, p.141), which means that acting in concert requires plurality and it cannot be done in isolation from local villagers. However, the VDSC always acted and made decisions in isolation from the villagers with all decisions being made without any attempt at togetherness. This contributed to the absence of participation and empowerment because they 'cannot be exercised without collectively deliberating' (Menge, 2019, p.4). Power does not belong to an individual but to a group of people, which effectively means that the power is constitutive of society (Arendt, 1970)

Additionally, the establishment of the VDSC was without legitimate empowerment by local people (Arendt, 1970). The appointment and composition of the VDSC favoured one political party and its members came mainly from the then government (as at May 2018), generally for political reasons. Some of the villagers argued that:

...he's [the VDSC leader] one of the people in the government party. So, if they have a meeting, it will be conducted among them (Hafiz)

...the VDSC leader is actually from the UMNO party...He is not liked by many and is not in agreement with others...(Razali)

The considerable unfairness of the appointment and the unequal composition of the VDSC in regard to the GDW strengthened the domination of power by VDSC members. The domination of power by VDSC was never recognised and granted by local villagers (Negura *et al.*, 2019). As such, the 'legitimate empowerment' claimed by the VDSC was in reality different from what Arendt (1970, p.44) argued: 'when we say of somebody that he is in power, we actually refer to his being empowered by a certain number of people to act in their name'. Power according to Arendt (1972, p.151) needs legitimacy from people and the legitimacy was derived from the 'initial getting together'. However, the process of getting together among villagers to deliberate ideas and solving problems in economic and development in the GDW has been

prevented by the VDSC (Arendt, 1970, 1972; Menge, 2019). Therefore, the establishment of the VDSC was never legitimate and it 'does not provide an environment in which collective action by the poor is encouraged' (Mosse, 2004, p.58).

The autocratic and undemocratic nature of the VDSC was clearly demonstrated in the case studies; for example, the VDSC was keen on participating in the village competition, so after closed discussions among VDSC members, they decided to participate because the winning village would receive a large amount of money and various types of assistance from the government. Yet the VDSC's decision to enter the village competition was not discussed with other villagers. This situation clearly deprived the villagers of any 'speech and action' to discuss whether or not the village competition was good for the village (Arendt, 1958, p.180; McSaid, 2010).

I was thinking that the previous VDSC might be different from ours [the current VDSC], and that's why we tried our best to participate in this competition. Changes might happen now. I discussed this with the VDSC leader and his wife. Actually his wife is also the CDD officer. We were together at that time and we discussed [decided] this matter and we hope that when we're leading the current VDSC, people can see the changes (Sharina)

I called upon my committee [the VDSC members] for a meeting. I asked them whether or not they agreed to compete...we won RM5000 [£920] at the district level competition. Another sum was received during the Independence month competition at the state level...(Nazmi)

In this situation, the GDW did not facilitate public participation but rather facilitated the empowerment of the VDSC. For individual local people to participate and be able to act in concert in the decision making process, much depends on speech and action. Speech and action enable local villagers to interpret, understand and articulate ideas in the GDW (Young, 2002). So, the role of the VDSC as a supportive structure to implement the GDW Programme at village level can therefore be seen as a mechanism to restrain the speech and action of local villagers in the decision making process. This clearly

showed the VDSC was not committed to ‘at least agree on fair procedures for making decisions’ in the GDW (Bernstein, 2012, p.9) and thus silenced the voice of local villagers in decision making process.

Arendt (1970) believed that the empowerment of people is achieved through common will formed in non-coercive communication. However, it was found from the village data that the decision making process of the GDW was communicated only between the VDSC members. In this case, when communicative action from the collection of speech focused on reaching agreement among the villagers who were participating in the GDW was absent, the participation and empowerment of the local villagers were also absent (Arendt, 1970; Habermas, 1977; Passerin d’Entrèves, 1989).

...the programme [the GDW] where they [the VDSC] have discussed this matter among themselves first. The VDSC leader and his committee members organised a meeting after the CDD officer had proposed the name of this village to participate in the ADSIM competition...they needed to discuss what they needed to do when they agreed to participate in the competition (Ramli, a villager)

This suggests that by disempowering the villagers, the VDSC limited the rational means of the local villagers to participate in unconstrained discussion and debate about the GDW (Young, 2002). Habermas (1977, p.18) stated that, the collective action can only be materialised when those who participating are in ‘unconstrained communication’. In the case studies, local villagers were never involved in any meetings, so any concerns which they might have had about the limitations of the Programme could not be discussed or deliberated on with others (Menge, 2019; Young, 2002).

The absence of empowerment by education towards collective action

The next contributory factor to explain the non-participation of local people in the decision making process was also the close connection with the concepts of power and empowerment. Freire’s (1970) concept of power tells the same story as Arendt’s. According to Freire, social change and the liberalisation of

people depend on their consciousness and on liberatory education for them to be able to act collectively (Chapter 4). The findings show that the introduction of the GDW and its implementation failed to create such 'liberatory education' (Freire, 1970). This meant that instead of facilitating public participation in the decision-making process and liberating rural communities, the GDW instead became just another means of perpetuating control and oppression (Blackburn, 2000, p.6). Accepting the knowledge and experience of the VDSC members, local people were made to believe that they were not fit to participate in the decision making process and 'have no purposes except those their oppressors [the VDSC] prescribe for them' (Freire, 1970, p.42). For instance, one of the villagers stated that

I would say the committee members are very good and helpful. If they didn't help me, who else would? I believe that I need their help...I'm an ordinary person, so nothing much that I can say (Rashidah)

In both case studies the VDSC members had common features: they were an educated group of people who had experience of being public officials and held office in political parties:

The VDSC leader had previously worked as a public officer. He just came back to this village after he retired and settled down here...He was also the UMNO Branch leader in this village (Fauziah)

...he's [the VDSC leader] also working as a public servant...he graduated from a public university (Badrul)

I [the VDSC secretary] was the only person who knew how to prepare the village profile. I also needed to prepare the agenda for a meeting...(Sharina)

So the VDSC members used their knowledge and experience to limit public participation in developing their 'consciousness'. The villagers often 'hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing and are incapable of learning anything' (Freire, 1993, p.45). This showed that the VDSC ignored 'a notion of communication to foster critical consciousness' (Waisbord, 2020, p.449).

I just listen to them and never suggest anything to them. I'm not educated so I just do whatever they think is good for me and my family (Rashidah, a villager)

The villagers are different because they can't stand by themselves and they don't even know how to use a computer...By whatever means, we need to guide them (Sharina, a VDSC member)

Indeed, Freire's (1970) concept of consciousness clearly suggests that the lack of participation and the disempowerment of the local villagers stemmed in part from the absence of dialogue between VDSC members and local villagers (Abdul Razzak, 2020). Freire (1970) believed that dialogue enables people to become aware of the existence of their exploitation by oppressors (in this case the VDSC) and in this respect, the absence of dialogue had led to little opportunity for villagers to understand the idea of the GDW and thus perpetuated the existing oppression of the villagers at the local level (Lissovoy and Cook, 2020). With all the information and power in their hands, all economic activities within the village were determined by the VDSC. So the GDW which was handed by the government directly to the VDSC members provided them with the means to monopolise public benefits and resources (Platteau and Abraham, 2002).

The public officials also acknowledged the importance of education and experience within the VDSC. For example, one public official stated that

In most of the villages which show initiative, it comes from villages where the VDSC chairman is the school teacher, which means that many of them are educated (Harun)

This shows that education and exposure based on the previous experiences of the VDSC members constrained local people's participation in that the VDSC members used their knowledge to 'collectively act' among themselves. The actions of the VDSC had demonstrated that its members had not recognised the collective action but rather had assumed the decision making over the GDW as a matter of their own personal prerogative (Suzina and Tufte, 2020). For instance,

...when we want to hold a meeting, the VDSC leader and I [the VDSC secretary] will discuss it together first...then during a monthly meeting we will table it to the other VDSC members...(Sharina)

We [the VDSC] assigned people based on groups [in order to implement the GDW]; that is, if you're excellent in economics and investment for example, so you'll be placed in that group (Mariam)

...she [the VDSC leader's wife] was very eager because her parents' village had already won the competition, and additionally she's also the CDD officer. So she persuaded the villagers and the committee to participate...(Siti)

This is opposed to what Freire (1970) argued is the collective dimension of knowledge (Mayo, 2007). In this situation, the non-participation of the villagers in the GDW was due to the failure of the VDSC to act collectively with the villagers (Thomas, 2009). Freire (1970, p.66) argued that the empowerment of the oppressed requires action in 'fellowship and solidarity' and not in 'isolation or individualism'.

In addition, neither educated public officials nor the VDSC members, for example in case study one, promoted ideas of communication and dialogue but rather imposed on the local villagers the idea of 'resources assistance' from the government. This showed that the GDW had become an instrument for the VDSC members to maintain the 'culture of silence' of the villagers and to perceive their decision as 'a value-neutral, objective and rational position' (Boone *et al.*, 2019, p.438), and that they were acting on behalf of the villagers. This is emphasised in the following comments:

...the government agencies will know us and we can get help from them, for example, getting a machine to make cookies; if the villagers breed a cow, they can apply to the agriculture agency [for a grant] to build a cow shed. It just that if you are lazy, you won't get anything (Amirah)

...the relationship between this village and the DO's office is becoming close, which means that the DO's office is really concerned about us. For example, everything we asked for was easily agreed, such as when we wanted to pave the village street, within a short period they came and paved it. It was the same with a street-light; they came very early and very quickly (Abdul)

From these remarks, it can be seen that the 'education' instilled by the government through the GDW was not to raise the consciousness of local villagers to recognise and fight against the factors by which they were being oppressed, but was used by the public officials through the VDSC to ensure that local villagers were simply the passive recipients of the Programme (Shih, 2018). Hence, the VDSC members acted as if they were 'empowered and authorised' by the villagers to make decisions about all the economic and development activities of the village through the GDW. This confirms Freire's (2000, p.94) statement that 'they [the government] approach the peasant or urban masses [local villagers] with projects which may correspond to their own view of world, but not to that of the people'.

Freire's (1970) concept of liberatory education therefore helps to explain that the GDW was used as an instrument of oppression by the VDSC members rather than a medium to facilitate public participation in the decision making process. That is, the so-called 'empowerment' received by the VDSC through an entirely undemocratic approach was fully strengthened by the exclusive information and knowledge which its members possessed. The collective group of people (the VDSC) who were knowledgeable and were supposed to act collectively with other local people and liberate them from poverty had manipulated their position for their own interests and goals. This suggests that the absence of empowerment by education towards collective action (dialogue and consciousness - the process by which people become aware of the sources of their oppression (Blackburn, 2000)) has revealed why the non-participation and disempowerment of local villagers, in turn, contributed to the failure of the GDW.

The failure of capability expansion

In addition to Arendt and Freire, Sen (1980, 1999) emphasised empowerment based on the concept of the capabilities of individuals. That is, the expansion of people's capability depends on how they value their lives and in this study the capability of villagers to participate in the decision making process was

considered as what the villagers wanted to do and to be (Chapter 4). However, the findings show that the capability of the villagers was limited and circumvented by the power of the local elites. In both case studies, local villagers had no opportunity to plan, initiate and decide on economic and development issues within their village: all of the opportunities were controlled and dominated by the local elites - the VDSC.

I can remember when he [the VDSC] appointed me to become leader of the environmental bureau (Ramli)

...all problems or complaints must be directed first to the VDSC leader (Badrul)

...we all participated by joining in any activity which we were told about by the VDSC leader and his committee members. For example, if they wanted to start any activity, if he says morning, we'll go out in the morning. Everyone obeys his decision (Saidatul)

This finding showed that the domination of power by the VDSC had diminished villagers' capability to participate in the decision making process. Local villagers were unable to choose between various functionings (in this case to decide on ways to improve their living conditions) (Gangas, 2016). Thus, this prevented them from increasing the 'command that people have over their lives' (Sen, 1996, p.88).

In order to enhance the capability of local villagers, the GDW was assumed to provide a platform for them to deliberate and debate the ideas of the Programme. It is essential, according to Sen (1999) that to achieve functionings and participation, deliberation and dialogue in the decision making process is seen as one way to enhance people's capability, by which is meant the ability of people to take advantage of undertaking any decisions or actions which can bring benefits and enable them to be who they want to be (Sen, 1999). However, access to the deliberation process was only available exclusively to the VDSC members. This shows that opportunities to collectively and actively participate in the GDW to bring benefits to the villagers were disabled by the *social conversion factor* (Robeyns, 2005), in this case, the

autocratic power structure which was manifested through the VDSC. This shows that the ability of local people to participate was actually interdependent and mutually reinforcing (Sen, 2002), because in this study, the social structure (the local elites) decreased the capability of villagers to participate in making decisions (Walker and Van der Maesen, 2004; Sen, 1999). This was because the oppression, domination and powerful control of the VDSC was interdependent and reinforced local people's non-participation in the decision making process. So the introduction and implementation of the GDW, instead of enhancing the freedom and increasing the capabilities of local villagers, limited the process of freedom (Sen, 2002).

The process of participation in decision making must be developed with the intention of increasing people's capabilities in order to achieve valuable 'beings and doings' (Sen, 2002), which means the ability to participate and make decisions on economic and development activities which can improve local people's live. In practice, however, the GDW was implemented to attain and strengthen the interests and goals of the VDSC and not to empower local villagers. This was because the implementation of the GDW was specifically arranged to provide more power to the VDSC and in turn was seen to prevent local villagers from participating in the Programme. This suggests that the GDW developed by the government deliberately maintained the disempowerment of local villagers because the VDSCs were both autocratic and undemocratic. The findings show that the implementation of the GDW in reality was a means to make local villagers unable to 'be who they want to be' and consequently produced different behavioural outcomes, in this case, non-participation in the GDW. For Sen (2002, p.79), the ability to participate was considered 'a significant ingredient, a critically important component' for every individual. So any unfairness and violation of local people's right to participate in the Programme must be critically scrutinised and removed (Sen, 2002; Unterhalter, 2003).

The way that the GDW was introduced and implemented on the ground played a major role in understanding participation in decision making. It is essential,

according to Sen (1999, p.31), those who are most directly involved should be given the opportunity to participate in deciding what choices should be made, which means that participation in decision making should not be denied by national or local overseers, politicians or self-appointed cultural experts (Sen, 1999, p.32). This suggests that the decision and specification of methods and processes for participating in the GDW must be decided by the local people themselves. The finding was in contrast to Sen's (1996, p.117) view that people should be given opportunities for deciding and in the 'identification of relevant consideration in suggesting particular proposals and encouraging public discussion' on the GDW. For instance, if the local people think that participation in decision making will benefit them, then they should consider and deliberate the ideas through public discussion (Deneulin, 2003). But, in practice, this never happened because the decision making process of the GDW was never shared with local people. This certainly led to disagreements and conflicts between the VDSC and local villagers:

We can't see good leadership from the current VDSC leader. If he wants to be a good leader, he must have a good rapport...If you're not thinking out of the box, how are you going to manage this village? (Fazrul)

I only know the VDSC leader. If he wanted to organise anything, I believe that people will support him. Tell me who will refuse over cleanliness? Everybody wanted to make sure this village clean, am I right? (Jamilah)

So limiting villagers' involvement (Deneulin, 2003; Sen, 1999) effectively meant the limitation of capabilities to participate in decision making to develop local economic and development conditions. This meant that the power of the VDSC had limited the 'flourishing of individual lives' to achieve functioning and participation in the decision making process (Deneulin and Davies, 2016, p.2).

Absence of understanding of the context of political and economic structure of the villages

A true understanding of public participation, specifically in rural areas, requires an understanding of the context and when 'the local is isolated from broader economic and political structures. This means that the contextuality of place...is underplayed' (Mohan and Stokke, 2000, p.249). Different contexts can produce different behavioural outcomes for villagers, and the context in which anything is delivered enables or disables participation and empowerment (Oxaal and Baden, 1997).

The findings show that different perceptions towards the VDSC also explain why local people refused to participate in the decision making process. In case study one, this refusal was not prevalent because the majority of the villagers were not opposed to the appointment of the VDSC members by the government because they had experienced 'better' administration by the VDSC members. In turn, the VDSC members were unlikely to be opposed by the villagers and this provided opportunities for the VDSC to control the whole decision making process. However, in case study two, the villagers were sceptical and opposed the VDSC members. This was largely due to previous bad experiences with the VDSC. The villagers argued that the VDSC chairman was

...just concerned about his followers. He knows that some of the villagers are very poor, but he gives priority to his own people [political allies] (Gee)

He [the VDSC leader] is always going around this village, he knows everything, for example about the village street, but he doesn't do anything, he just stays silent. He just knows about the things which go into his pocket first (Razali)

This suggests that the negative experiences of villagers of an autocratic leader had developed negative perceptions of participation in decision making over the GDW. Indeed, the VDSC leader claimed that

...very few people support me because many of the villagers are very negative towards the government...when I look at this village, support from the villagers was small, so I didn't implement it [the GDW]. Actually, from my observation, this village is a little bit slow (Zaki)

This suggests that the VDSCs in the villages play a crucial role in determining how dynamic the local people's participation is in decision making.

Additionally, the geographical structure and the occupations of the villagers also shaped their understanding of and attitudes towards participation in decision making. The findings show both villages had a similar geographical structure: limited space and idle land. Most of the land was given over to residential use and the rest was used for paddy plantations. Considering the requirements of the GDW (Chapter 5) and the restrictions of the geographical structure, it was no surprise to see a lack of public participation in the Programme. The villagers claimed, for example, that

... we can't do much in terms of economic activity. Most of the villagers work as paddy planters and rubber tappers; the village is small and there is no unused land (Bashirah)

In this village, the area is only suitable for a residential area. In other villages, they have a lot of idle land. But here, as you can see, there's very little idle land (Gee)

We don't have any economic activities because the land is limited. Not only that, the majority of the villagers work as paddy cultivators [and don't have much time left to participate in the GDW] (Fazrul)

In terms of occupations, most of the villagers worked as paddy planters and this required considerable physical effort and there was a specific schedule to be followed (Chapter 8). So any activity which clashed with their permanent work would be abandoned and ignored as they relied heavily on the income from their main employment. For example, Salmi, a villager, stated that 'my children are busy with their own jobs...They also don't have much free time'. This was typical of the time constraints faced by villagers.

In turn, the development of the GDW which was intended to facilitate public participation in decision making was in reality perceived differently by local people. According to Mansuri and Rao (2004, p.2), participation is important and 'can lead to a publicry (sic) who are capable of undertaking self-initiated development activity', nevertheless, as the discussion above has shown, local participation is not actually participation at all but simply barely disguised control (Craig and Porter, 1997, p.229).

The various contributory factors discussed above have shown why the villagers in both case studies had not participated in decision making processes and had not been empowered to act collectively in regard to the GDW. The analysis was made based on the theories of participation, power and empowerment. Based on the work of Arendt and Freire, the non-participation and disempowerment of villagers in terms of being able to act collectively was a consequence of the problem of having an autocratic and undemocratic VDSC. Arendt's theory suggests that the VDSCs had ignored the local villagers' requirements by dominating and controlling the decision making in the village. Freire's perspective explains that the VDSC members' knowledge and experience were used as a means to achieve their own interests and goals, thus further oppressing the villagers. Similarly, Sen's capability approach also shows that the structure was not supportive and that it circumvented the capability and capacity of the villagers to participate in decision making in regard to the GDW. Public participation in decision making in rural development must therefore be understood from several underlying features which cannot be accounted for solely through a continuum of participation. It must be looked at from the perspective of various key actors and the local context in which the participation is implemented. Overall, understanding the levels of participation of villagers in decision making requires the employment of a political economy perspective.

The theoretical exploration of participation in the first and second sections of this chapter on the facets of non-participation in the GDW cannot be fully explained by Arnstein's ladder of participation. The findings of this study have

demonstrated how implicit and explicit social and relational issues of power and different key actors have shaped public participation and empowerment in decision making in rural development. This discussion has so far produced two principal discourses: the limitations of the current theories of participation to explain the lack of public participation in decision making, and the usefulness of the theories of power and empowerment for understanding the non-participation and the disempowerment in the GDW. In the next section, the final research question will be discussed by integrating the findings from Chapters 7 and 8, and then the proposed model for public participation will be considered.

Public Participation and the Political Economy Perspective

The main purpose of this section is to assess whether the GDW succeeded as an approach to facilitating public participation in rural development before moving to an alternative model. The integration of the two previous chapters which covered three levels - macro, meso and micro - is needed in order to answer the final research question. The findings lead to the conclusion that the answer to the final research question, 'How far did the GDW succeed as a strategy to facilitate public participation in decision making?', is that it failed to facilitate public participation in decision making in economic and development activities. This is because, first, the introduction of the GDW at macro level was actually not intended to encourage local people's participation in decision making, rather it was to decentralise responsibility to the local villages as promoted by the neo-liberal perspective; and second, it was also implemented in a top-down way by policy implementers at the meso level; and finally, it strengthened the existing powerful actors at the micro level. Hence, instead of promoting public participation in decision making in rural development, the GDW actually strengthened the power of the central level and the public officials and VDSC at village level, and it contributed to the lack of public participation and the disempowerment of local villagers in the Programme.

So far, the discussion in this chapter has explored the complex understanding of participation and empowerment in rural development by locating policy development and its implementation firmly in the context of Malaysia from the economic and political perspectives. The discussion now turns from participation in decision making from the political economy perspective.

A Model for Public Participation in Decision Making in Rural Development

Developing a model for public participation (Figure 9.1) requires us to move beyond Arnstein's descriptive ladder. The findings of this study have shown that public participation and empowerment in decision making in rural development must be understood from an analysis of the power relations, which Arnstein failed to capture.

First, a detailed examination of the macro level suggests that policy making and decisions about the public participation programme are a product of the neo-liberal paradigm and policy makers' related decisions to increase the economic efficiency of resource distribution to local people. The findings have shown that the GDW was introduced by the central government with the apparent aim of facilitating public participation but in practice was made to decentralise the responsibility of the government without any attempt to integrate local knowledge or to understand the social context of the villages. Instead, to ensure the success of the Programme, the central government must pursue policy that would guarantee public participation and remove the domination of power by the VDSC. This requires efforts from all actors at the macro (policy makers), meso (policy implementers) as facilitators and supporters, and micro-level (local villagers).

Second, investigation at the meso level shows that the implementation of the GDW was entirely top-down: all decisions were made without any consultation with the local people. So the failure of people to participate in the GDW at the micro level was due to the failure of the officers to consult, and to them being biased and concealing information from the local villagers. As such, to

ensure better implementation of participation, the various roles of the public officials, specifically the CDD, must be reviewed and rotated in order to avoid the continuous construction of a relationship of patronage between officials and local leaders. In rural development, the role of the officials is only to facilitate the implementation of the GDW and not to dictate to the local villagers as this might circumscribe the freedom of development and action of local people, and then, in turn, fail to facilitate public participation in decision making.

Third, investigation at the micro level showed that the non-participation and disempowerment of local people in the rural development programme was closely related to the concepts of power and empowerment, such as the existence of unequal power relations and the absence of empowerment. These were largely due to the absolute power of the VDSC as a village association appointed by the government over the implementation of the GDW. So to ensure public participate in decision making, first, local people must be given the absolute right and freedom to act in concert, which effectively means that the process of participation must allow local people to debate and deliberate, and to agree or disagree to participate without any discrimination, exploitation or suppression by the local elite. Next, not only must the GDW be reviewed, it must also take into consideration the different levels of power of local people and their views about participation in decision making. Finally, any capability approach suggested to the local people must be accompanied by a supportive social structure, and this can only be done when local people themselves are able to interact freely and to debate and decide on their own, based on collective decisions about the economic and development programmes within their village.

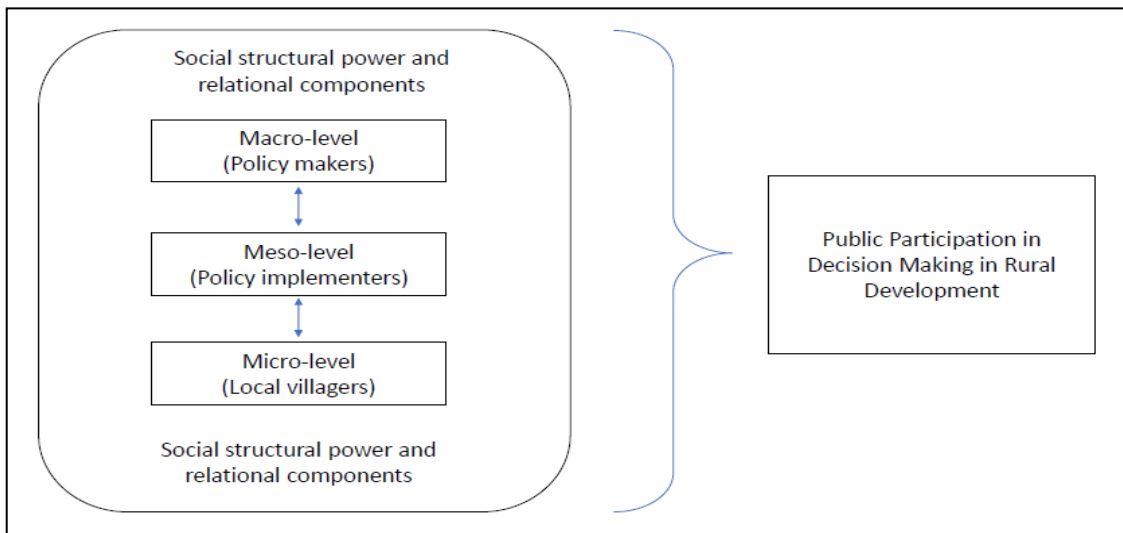


Figure 9.1: Proposed Model for Public Participation in Decision Making in Rural Development

Conclusion

This chapter has brought together the findings of this research and considered them in relation to previous studies and the theoretical literature. A potential alternative model for public participation has been proposed. There is now an established body of empirical work which highlights the limitations of the current development and participation theories from fully understanding the lack of public participation in decision making in the rural development context. Developing a model for public participation requires moving beyond the economic terms of development and the continuum of participation. That effectively means that it must be constructed by legitimately elected local people through public debate and deliberation and without discrimination towards any group. This is important for preserving the right and freedom of local people to act in concert to determine the economic and development activities which can improve their lives. Policy makers must therefore decentralise enough financial support for local people to implement their own activities successfully. At the same time, to facilitate public participation in decision making, policy implementers also need real decentralisation of authority from the central level, specifically financial support and an appropriate workforce to effectively implement it at the local level. It is

important to avoid the top-down implementation which is largely due to limited financial support from the central level and the lack of public officials at the local level to supervise and monitor almost 15,552 *kampung* (villages) (as of 2014).

In order to understand this problem, an understanding of the different roles of key actors at different levels is required to ensure the relevance of participation in rural development. From the political economy point of view, this study has examined several aspects which contribute to the lack of public participation and empowerment in the GDW. This chapter has highlighted the social power structure and relational components at three important levels which cover all aspects of policy-making, implementation and the process of participation. This political economy approach integrates the political and economic aspects as well as power and empowerment to investigate policy development and its implementation on the ground.

Therefore, the proposed model of public participation suggests that the terms such as 'laziness' and 'passive recipient' which are constantly used to describe the rural poor should no longer be used in the context of rural development in Malaysia. This is because the empirical case studies of two villages have shown that the non-participation and disempowerment of rural villagers occurred because of the social power structure and relational components which underlie the implementation of public participation and which have been established in the villages over a long period and have denied the local villagers of any opportunity to participate in the GDW.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

This thesis has analysed the political economy of public participation in decision making with specific reference to the GDW in Malaysia. It has argued that the most widely used approach to participation was insufficient to understand it in this context. Without a different model of public participation the low involvement of local people in the decision making process will continue. This study has drawn on several theoretical strands, including development, rural development, participation, power and empowerment, and political economy. Regardless of the widespread diversity of the theories which explain the process of public participation, there has been a tendency for most widely used approaches to categorise the process and the extent of participation based on typologies of participation. Furthermore, with the influence of neo-liberal globalisation in economic and development strategies in many less developed countries (LDCs), it is necessary to analyse public participation from both economic and the political perspectives. So adopting a political economy approach here was important because it enabled an analysis of the key actors involved at all critical levels of participation: macro, meso and micro. In particular, it helped to understand processes of public participation which are discursively constructed by different agents such as individuals, groups, families, government bodies, NGOs and IGOs and also formal and informal institutions. The political economy of public participation in decision making was used to explore the GDW and its implementation at the local level in Malaysia. Following its introduction in 1996, there was little evidence of public participation. Huge financial allocations were made and various activities were developed by the government to facilitate the Programme but these still did not increase the participation of local villages. Using the political economy perspective enabled a critical analysis of the policy rhetoric and the reality which was proposed at the international level, promoted at the national level and implemented at the local level.

The discussion of the theories of development in Chapter 2 described how development has evolved, and showed the compromise between economic growth and human development and how this has affected the understanding of rural development which underpinned Chapter 3. Chapter 4 examined how academic research on public participation and power developed from Arnstein's ladder and brought in Arendt's, Freire's and Sen's theories of empowerment. In order to gain a better understanding of public participation in decision making in Malaysia's context, Chapter 5 gave an overview of economic and development policies in Malaysia. Chapter 6 explained the methodology used in this thesis. The political economy perspective was employed as a theoretical lens in order to understand the key roles played by the actors involved in participation, the nature of participation, how it was implemented, and its relationship to its social context. It was employed not to examine the lack of participation using a range of typologies, moving from the complete absence of participation at one end to full public participation at the other, but to explore how participation was affected by the choices made between central (macro-level), state (meso-level) and local (micro-level) institutions. The qualitative research method which was used comprised in-depth interviews conducted with different key stakeholders, including villagers themselves. The two village case studies which were presented in Chapters 7 and 8 investigated how the framing of participation at the macro and meso levels shaped the implementation and the extent of participation at the micro level. The findings discussed in Chapter 9 revealed that the GDW had failed to facilitate public participation in decision making. The failure of the public participation programme was a consequence of several key contributory factors which are interrelated at the three critical levels, the macro, meso and micro.

This thesis includes specific suggestions based on a political economy perspective on public participation in decision making. These include the importance of analysing the roles of the IGOs in shaping the economic and development policy in many LDCs, the role of key actors of policy making who influenced the policy formulation at central government level, the roles of

policy implementers at the central, state and local levels and the understanding of local people in public participation in decision making in order to analyse the power relations which existed in the local villages. This final chapter revisits the research questions of the study and the analyses set out in the previous chapters and then considers the implications for policy before observing its limitations and offering suggestions for future research in this field. There are some personal reflections in the last section of this chapter.

Research Questions Revisited

This thesis has assessed public participation in decision making based on a political economy perspective. Specifically, it scrutinised why there has been a lack of public participation in Malaysia's GDW Programme. To answer this question, a conceptual framework was developed to cover policy making, implementation and the process of participation in the programme at the macro, meso and micro levels. The findings indicate that the very low level of public participation in decision making in the Programme had its roots in the operation of power relations reflected in the respective roles played by key actors at the three levels, which effectively have curbed public participation and caused the Programme to fail in this respect. The concept of public participation in decision making was introduced as a mechanism to, on the one hand, decentralise responsibility to villages but, on the other, to increase the centralisation of power among local elites. In practice the idea of 'participation' was purely rhetorical because of the inconsistency between what was proposed by the government and the reality revealed by the case studies: a distinct lack of possibilities for public participation in decision making.

This research was focused on four questions:

1. Why was the Visionary Capability Movement (GDW) Programme introduced in Malaysia?
2. How had the GDW Programme been implemented on the ground?
3. How did local villagers understand the concept of public participation in decision making?
4. How far did the GDW Programme succeed as a strategy to facilitate public participation in decision making?

These research questions were approached from a conceptual foundation in political economy in order to understand the various interests involved in the policy of public participation in the GDW in Malaysia. This has been achieved by dividing the understanding of public participation into three levels: macro, meso and micro. The first two questions were interlinked and were answered through the discussions of development and rural development in Chapters 2, 3 and 7.

To answer the first research question; the GDW paid particular attention to the new development paradigm manifested through development goals and poverty reduction programmes which were promoted by the IGOs through their economic and development agendas. The thesis explored the ideas of IGOs at international level and policy makers at central government level by focusing on why this particular programme was introduced rather than other programmes. This was done by examining the global economic and development trends and linking them to Malaysia's specific context. It paid particular attention to the macro level of public participation in Malaysia and the key actors involved in the policy making process at a central government. It was found that the introduction of the GDW as a means of facilitating public participation in decision making was actually shaped by neo-liberal ideas; similarly Walker (2005, 2018) stated that in many countries social policies were determined by the neo-liberal ideas promoted by IGOs. The main goals were to maximise the role of the market and minimise the state's involvement,

characterised by the administrative decentralisation which was intended to redistribute the authority, however, the intended redistribution never happened because the power to decide was still controlled at central government level. Corbett and Walker (2013, p.463) reported that under neo-liberalism, the 'state designed to shift responsibility, but not power, on to individuals'. The influence of the neo-liberal policy in Malaysia was not surprising because it has existed for almost two decades and had become the main catalyst of international economic policies (Walker, 2005). It had become the main method of deliberation and its widespread influence had affected the way people translate, reside in and perceive the world (Harvey, 2007) and, in this case, the economic development policy in Malaysia. Haque (2008) argued that the global neo-liberal policy approach has had significant effects, especially in developing countries where it has reinforced the market-friendly system and replaced an important role of the government, and the result of this thesis had proven the claim. As such, neo-liberalism provided opportunities for the central government to shed its role as a provider (Walker, 2005) and 'decentralise' it to the state and local levels. This current study has revealed that in Malaysia the rhetoric of the government was actually based on the 'deconcentration' of responsibility, which effectively meant no financial support and no transfer of freedom of authority to the state and local levels. This situation was best described as the recentralisation of decentralisation (Kakumba, 2010) and according to Neshkova (2014), participation is less likely to occur when financial processes are centralised.

This led to the second research question and attention here was focused on how the GDW had been implemented on the ground. It examined whether in practice the Programme was what the government had proposed. If not, was this a problem of implementation or a matter of rhetoric *versus* reality. Interviews were conducted in order to investigate the process of implementation between policy implementers at the central, state and local government levels. By using the political economy perspective at the meso-level the findings revealed that the implementation of the GDW was a wholly top-down process. As noted in the discussion of the first question above,

decentralisation of the necessary economic and development authority to the state and local levels never actually occurred because the implementation process was masterminded and decided by the ruling elite in the central government. The top-down process and the dominance of elites are prominent and clearly visible in many LDCs, such as in Ghana (Mohammed, 2016), so this thesis provides further explanation of why this had happened in Malaysia's context. In effect, the common public participation framework proposed by the government was basically developed to support a programme concerned with ensuring that the government remains in control. When top-down governance was in place, the process of implementation was deployed by public officials who lacked an understanding of the intentions of the programme. So, this study has revealed that the implementation of the GDW was typically defined from the perspective of the implementing agency which, 'despite frequent mandates to encourage beneficiary participation, tended to repeat the top-down implementation model' (Hafner, 1987, p.88; Korten, 1982).

The third research question was answered with empirical data from the two village case studies. This involved examining in detail the understanding of participation among local villagers and how the process operated on the ground. The theories of participation and power discussed in Chapter 4 were used to understand public participation in both case studies. In the fieldwork, the process of participation was explored and interviews were conducted with villagers in both case studies. The findings from both case studies showed that there was a clear lack of public participation in decision making in the Programme. Although the programme did not empower the local villagers, in contrast, it did further empower the village development and security committee (VDSC) members who already carried authority in the village. These findings were not consistent with Arnstein's (1969) basic ladder of citizen participation (Chapter 4) because both case studies, based on Arendt's (1956, 1970, 1986), Freire's (1970) and Sen's (1980, 1999) theories of power and empowerment, revealed that the participation and empowerment of rural people were affected by power relations within their society. The contributory

factors (Chapter 9) prevented local people from participating in decision making with regard to the Programme and the elites' interests and power relations were hardly visible because 'they are embedded in social and cultural practices' (Cooke and Kothari, 2001, p.14) and only appeared through the lens of the political economy perspective. So, as discussed in Chapter 8, both case studies revealed the gap between policy rhetoric and reality and why there was so little participation in decision making by villagers in the GDW.

The fourth research question was addressed in Chapter 9. Using the political economy perspective, it scrutinised the key actors such as the policy makers, the implementers, and the officials at the state and local levels, and their interests behind the formulation and the implementation of the GDW on the ground in relation to the concepts of power and empowerment. This was done by integrating the findings from Chapters 7 and 8 within a theoretical framework of political economy. Chapters 7 and 8 revealed the discrepancies between what had been proposed at central level and the reality on the ground. The integration of these empirical findings showed that the GDW had failed to facilitate public participation in decision making specifically in the context of economic and rural development. In turn, a model of public participation in decision making was proposed based on the political economy perspective. This model took into consideration the three levels of participation - macro, meso and micro - and provided a broad picture for understanding how public participation in decision making works, and revealed the roles played by key actors at each level which together contributed to the lack of public participation in decision making in the GDW.

Contribution to Knowledge and the Future of Participation

This thesis has contributed to the body of knowledge in three important respects: theoretical, methodological and empirical. First, in terms of its theoretical contribution, this thesis adds to knowledge on development, rural development, public participation, power and empowerment, and political economy. On the one hand, theories of development and rural development

explained that the people-centred approach is an alternative way of reducing poverty and increasing the development of rural areas (Cornwall and Brock, 2005; Hulme, 2010) offered in the MDGs/SDGs and PRSPs, which effectively means that local people are given more voice and power in decision making over their own affairs. On the other hand, to understand how people can participate in decision making, Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation has been widely used in research in this field. The highest rung of the ladder is recognised as citizen control over decision making and the lowest indicates total non-participation in decision making. However, the conceptualisation of public participation and its measurement failed to explain the lack of public participation in decision making in this study because it does not explain how the progression through the stages can be facilitated or prevented (Chapters 4 and 9). This research has therefore drawn on the insights of theories of power and empowerment (Arendt, 1986; Freire, 1970; Sen, 1980) to understand the lack of public participation in decision making that the research uncovered. The findings suggest that greater attention must include the priority to explain the influence of the IGOs and the key policy makers who held power and authority in many LDCs and show how the ideology of the IGOs and key policy makers affect those who live in the villages. This thesis has therefore helped to bridge a theoretical gap by using power and empowerment theories to understand public participation in decision making.

The methodology chosen is another contribution of this research. A political economy perspective was used in this study as a framework for understanding public participation in decision making. This adds to the body of knowledge by emphasising three critical levels - macro, meso and micro - of political economy (Chapter 6). Instead of relying overly on economic measurement and the typologies of participation, it has explained public participation on the basis of economic and political perspectives. It has provided explanations of 'why' and asked 'how' and 'what' questions about the properties which constitute things and has not tried to find a causal explanation (Parsons, 2010, p.86). The findings have shown that the interactions and decisions of the actors at the three different levels have shaped the formulation,

implementation and process of participation at the local level. The methodology used in this study therefore provides an alternative approach to understanding public participation in decision making and the underlying features which cannot be quantitatively foreseen and measured.

Finally, this thesis contributes a new empirical case study of public participation in decision making in Malaysia. Previous studies of the GDW only targeted VDSC members and village headmen as respondents. This is the first study to provide empirical evidence from local villagers themselves on participation which put much emphasis on the important roles of public officials, the local leader (the VDSC) and local villagers in two case studies. It has shown how villagers in both of the case-study villages were unable to participate in decision making, being prevented by explicit (capability expansion through the GDW) and implicit (the unequal power relations and the absence of empowerment) power relations in the implementation of the programme at village level. Also, the top-down approach practised by the policy implementers strengthened not only their power but also that of the local leaders. In this sense, both case studies explained the need for a political economy perspective, combined with theories of power and empowerment, in order to understand public participation in decision making, or lack of it, alongside development and participation theories. This suggests that the causes of the lack of participation ultimately lay both with the central government, because it had not pursued policies which would guarantee participation or policies which addressed the existence of highly unequal power relations within the villages; and with the leaders of the villages which used the GDW to reinforce their own power.

Implications for Policy and Practitioners

This section sets out several implications for policy arising from the research and is intended to facilitate public participation in decision making processes. The analysis at the macro level suggested that the introduction of public participation in decision making was based on the neo-liberal policies

promoted by the IGOs. The findings have shown that the role of the IGOs was huge and had implications for the direction of Malaysia's economic and development policies. Several approaches were introduced and most importantly the basis of Malaysia's economy was driven by the market sector. These approaches were in line with a neo-liberal globalisation policy which promoted efficiency and effectiveness in getting things done, which effectively meant cost reduction, the reduction of budget allocations to government agencies and the promotion of decentralising authority to state and local agents. Decentralisation of authority is not an easy process. Several developed and developing countries have experienced success, but at the same time there are unsuccessful stories which have worsened the conditions of the people. Based on these experiences and the findings of this study, several strategies could be utilised by Malaysia in the decentralisation of authority.

So, real decentralisation of authority can only be achieved when, first, there is a strong political will in the central government. Political will was termed political commitment by Houdret and Harnisch (2018, p.19), who emphasised the need to ensure 'effective power-sharing'. This includes the willingness of the central government officials to allow state and local officials to plan, decide and control the programme in ways which can facilitate local public participation in decision making. This means also that the necessary authority and planning responsibility should be transferred to public officials so that they can identify the best approaches to attract local villagers to participate in decision making and to determine the flexible criteria for active participation based on the capability and capacity of the villages (for example, resources, literacy rate, geographical structure and culture). However, this transfer of authority must take into consideration 'what motivates the central government to give up powers and resources' (Eaton *et al.*, 2010, p.xii) and requires that the necessary authority be decentralised to the officials at state and local level. This is because the political will is only likely to be present when the central government will receive a possible gain from it.

As well as the political will of the central government to transferring the necessary authority to the state and local leaders, the second key element is reviewing the duplicated roles of agencies. The rules and regulations on the decentralisation of authority and implementation must clearly define the roles and responsibility of each public agency involved in rural development and their specific job scopes regarding facilitating public participation at the local level. This is important for ensuring the accountability and transparency of the agencies in performing their tasks. Indeed, 'a set of rules defining who has authority and who will be held accountable' (Azfar *et al.*, 1999, p.5) is crucial and these rules and regulations must be clear and unambiguous to ensure an efficient decentralisation process. For example, the government must review the duplicated roles and ambiguous functions between different MRRD agencies at central and state government levels. The findings of this study have shown that the CDD and the KEDA are the two main agencies with overall responsibility for the socio-economic development of rural people in Kedah state and direct responsibility for the implementation of the GDW at the local level. The CDD has many roles, for example, community development and training, and the KEDA is responsible for regional development within Kedah state. So the responsibility for developing the villages in Kedah was spread between the two agencies. The supervision, numbers and types of villages were decided by the central government but the condition of the villages and the capability of the public officials there were not taken into consideration. Once that has been done, the government should review the existing procedures for assigning tasks and villages to each public official. It should also allow deliberation by the public officials, which is particularly important when the activities involve a budget allocation.

Third, the transfer of authority to the federal state and village levels must take into consideration the capabilities of the administrative officials and the provision of adequate financial resources (Rondinelli, 1981, 2015). The functions and responsibility given by the central government to the state level and local level officials must match the capability of the officials in order to ensure the effectiveness of the decentralisation of authority (Azfar *et al.*,

1999; Brinkerhoff and Azfar, 2006). This research has shown that the public officials have had problems with carrying out the required fieldwork and monitoring each village under their supervision because one CDD officer has to attend at least 60 villages' meetings and in practical terms this is simply not possible. Not only that, the research has also shown that each village needed to organise a village meeting once a month, which effectively meant that the CDD official had to travel constantly. This consumes both time and energy, so to ensure that public officials are able to attend meetings frequently and meet with villagers, there must be an adequate number of public officials to visit all the villages (the numbers should be proportionate to the number of villages). The personal involvement of officials in village meetings is deemed to be important because it is the most effective way for them to understand the condition of the villages and to get feedback from local villagers. The officials can assist by providing help and information about the right channels to apply for support with the village infrastructure and to present any grievances. This process could ensure the sustainability of rural people in improving their own lives. The incapability of public officials is not the only issue; the transfer of authority had been made without adequate financial allocation. Public officials faced problems over allocating budgets to the local villages because of budget constraints. The budget allocation is extremely important because it will be used to fund the programmes and activities such as village meetings and competitions. With almost 15,441 villages throughout Malaysia, huge amounts of money from the government are clearly required. The public officials need to work closely with villages and monitor their activities. This of course includes a budget for the training, travel and accommodation of public officials. As such, one way which would perhaps work is to 'establish and secure a reliable revenue base' (UN, 2000, p.109) by ensuring the accountability and responsibility of the officials for financial expenditure.

As well as decentralising authority to the state and local levels, the findings of this study have also shown that at the meso level, the implementation of the GDW has also been subject to a purely top-down approach. Public officials

have only received what has been decided by the central government and they are then responsible for implementing it in the villages. Analysis of the findings has shown that this top-down approach was related to the failure of the decentralisation of authority discussed at the macro level. The top-down implementation depended on public officials who lacked the authority to plan or decide on participation in the programme at local level. This was because the public officials were not recognised as important elements that 'incorporate elements to achieve success' (Thompson, 2000, p.519). However, they were under pressure to meet the criteria set by the central government and the only way to do this and to meet key performance indicators was to treat the process of implementing the GDW as a top-down mechanism. To avoid this problem occurring in the future, it is suggested that the government should allow reasonable time for officials to visit, meet and get feedback from local villagers, and to allow flexibility in implementing the programme by taking the socio-economic context of each village into consideration, and ensuring that the objectives of the programme are realistic and practical. These can be done by the central government enabling regular deliberation with public officials at the state and local levels because a good programme and policy are determined by 'the bargaining between members of the organisations and their clients' (Lester and Stewart, 1996, pp.103-105). Two-way communication is extremely important and feedback from both sides of the relationship, policy makers and public officials, must be encouraged. The communication between various internal and external stakeholders is important in policy implementation (Long and Franklin, 2004), and in this case between public officials at the central, state and local levels, and the local people in the villages.

The findings of this research also have implications for micro-level activities. The analysis of the findings has shown that the lack of public participation in decision making was due to several factors (Chapter 9) which could be directly related to the concepts of participation and power. The problem stemmed from the power over the appointment of the VDSC members and its impact on local villagers. Several reforms are suggested to the strategies and the process

of implementing the GDW at the local level. The suggested reforms are based on the factors which contribute to non-participation in decision making.

First, the VDSC members must accept full transparency and accountability in performing their tasks (Gaventa and McGee, 2013; Musgrave and Wong, 2016). This is to mitigate elite capture and unequal power relations by the VDSC members in the implementation of the GDW. On the one hand, to ensure that transparency is practised by the VDSC members, they must disclose all information pertaining to the implementation of the GDW, including the financial status of the VDSC, the support agencies, funding received from a central government, state and district office, and local villagers. This information must be displayed at village halls or on public notice boards which can be accessed by local villagers (Lucas, 2016). On the other hand, to ensure their accountability, the VDSC members must provide proper documentation and records of village meetings and report after each meeting. All of these documents must be disseminated to all villagers before, during and after meetings. This is an aspect of accountability which needs to be practised by each of the VDSC members. However, Gaventa and McGee (2013) cautioned that the effectiveness of transparency and accountability must also depend on the context, and they suggested that one of the ways to achieve this is to make sure that every 'citizen must be able to process, analyse or use the newly available information' (p.520). This can very likely be achieved because most of the rural villagers in Malaysia have access to traditional media such as television and radio and to modern media such as Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter. This might provide a platform for the villagers to understand the GDW and in particular how the VDSC members must play their role in enhancing public participation as suggested by the central government. This will enable villagers to check whether the local leaders are going astray and if necessary to push them back on track.

Second, in order to increase public participation in decision making, education is essential (Freire, 1970). Education is an approach to increasing the awareness of local villagers of opportunities to participate in decision making.

This requires both public officials and local villagers to communicate and to share their understanding of the world (Beckett, 2013), in this case the economic and development affairs and villagers' participation in the decision-making process. The true education process will encourage deliberation and reflection by other local members. Several strategies must be used to encourage others to participate, such as flyers, social media and announcements at the mosque where people gather for Friday prayers.

Third, participation in decision making requires alternatives to ensure flexibility in its implementation because not all villagers are able to participate or spend much time in the deliberation process (Fung, 2006). In practice, the process of participation requires frequent meetings and this might prevent the involvement of some villagers who are restricted by office hours and other routine work. An alternative to the village meeting must therefore be found. For example, social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Messenger and Facebook are powerful tools for engaging local people and especially for reaching the young and working people, most of whom have access to these media. Social media is one of the modern tools in order to engage local villagers and it can gather unlimited numbers of local villagers (Chuangying, 2016). Participation in decision making does not necessarily require people to always gather in one place but can also be achieved virtually in order to engage particular groups of villagers and with greater frequency than a public meeting.

The explanations given above have provided several suggestions for improving the GDW Programme. However, instead of regarding the GDW Programme as problem-free, it is worth discussing its structural limitations. The following section explains several structural limitations and make recommendations for participation in the programme in Malaysia's context.

The findings showed that there was no participation let alone empowerment in the GDW Programme. This means that the villagers had never discussed their ideas, conveyed their opinions, been empowered for collective action or even

encouraged to hold a dialogue with the village headman and the VDSC. Despite the domination of the village headman and the VDSC in the Programme, this situation could also be due to the lack of awareness among the villagers of the importance of the participation programme. So they had no incentive to ask questions or to express their dissatisfaction towards the village headman and the VDSC. Based on this finding, it is recommended that a participation awareness programme should be conducted in order to increase the knowledge and understanding of local villagers about their rights to participate, and to emphasise the importance of public participation in their own economic and development affairs. This is important because when local villagers are equipped with knowledge and education, they can express their ideas and discuss their opinions effectively. The local villagers must be made aware of the benefits of participation and the approaches which they can use in order to influence others. This can become an approach to 'challenge elite-centred local power and political forces and allow marginalised groups to engage more constructively' (Pandeya, 2015, p.93). In fact, the findings showed that in both case study villages the local leader and the VDSC had dominated the decision making because they knew the benefits which they could gain from the programme. To challenge this domination, the local villagers must be 'willing to enter the terrain of others and learn to play by their rules' (Eversole, 2010, p.38). This means that when local villagers have knowledge and awareness of the importance of public participation, they can easily challenge the domination of the VDSC and the local leader at village level. This can certainly be done by 'instil[ling] awareness and confidence in them to take part in an autonomic manner' (Narayanan, 2003, p.2486).

The next recommendation is to promote collaboration between the responsible ministries. The findings showed that the MRD was the principal ministry responsible for the formulation and implementation of the GDW Programme. For the implementation, the functions were transferred to its agencies established in each state throughout Malaysia, for example, the community development department (CDD) and Kedah regional development authority (KEDA), which in reality were not effective (Chapters 7 and 9). Given

the absolute authority of the MRD, this programme had been co-opted by public officials at state and local level to suit the aim of the programme which was developed at the central level. So in order to minimise co-optation and political intervention in the participation programme, effective collaboration is needed. This can be done by reducing the power of the MRD by involving other key actors at the macro, meso and micro levels. Collaboration such as this is commonly used to solve social problems, promote innovation, resolve environmental problems, reduce poverty and provide better services (Gray and Purdy, 2018; Tulder *et al.*, 2016). So to improve the participation programme, there is a need for effective collaboration between the MRD and other relevant ministries such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industries (MAFI). The findings showed that both case study villages were dependent on agricultural activities such as paddy cultivation, so the role of the MAFI is relevant to the participation programme because paddy cultivation activity falls under its purview. The involvement of the MAFI could reduce the power imbalances because the collaboration would ‘cede some power and influence over decisions in order that their chances of achieving their joint objectives are enhanced’ (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002, p.6), in this case, both ministries will work together to achieve the aim of the participation programme in rural areas. To illustrate, as well as the MRD, the MAFI is also required to mobilise its agencies at state and village level to implement the participation programme because most of the paddy cultivation villages in the state of Kedah have a MAFI agency known as the Muda Agricultural Development Authority (MADA) head unit leader who has been appointed based on his experience in paddy cultivation activities, and not a political appointment as in the case of the VDSCs, this will be discussed in detail in the next section. The co-optation which exists in the participation programme can therefore be minimised by the collaboration between the two key actors, the MRD and the MAFI.

Finally, the findings showed that the government had failed to understand the context and recognise the insufficiency of the existing local resources of the villagers (Botchway, 2001). Due to this problem, the villagers were blamed for

being lazy and not interested in participating in the economic activities introduced by the government (as claimed by the CDD officers and the VDSC). In reality, however, the problems had arisen from the pre-decided participation programme, the top-down approach and the criteria set out by the officials which were impossible for the villagers to achieve. The government therefore needs to be sensitive to the context of the villages, for instance not all villagers are capable of participating and have resources such as idle land and spaces for economic and development project. It is therefore recommended that the participation programme needs to be designed on the basis of the existing and available resources of the villages (Sam, 2010) and not imposed as something new which is impossible to achieve. To illustrate, both case study villages depended on paddy cultivation activities because that was their main source of income. Each paddy cultivator is required to register with a committee in the farmers' association. By being in the association, they are committed to specific activities - for example in training development for paddy cultivation - conducted by the MADA. This shows that the villagers as paddy cultivators are interested in participating in economic activity which is related to their source of income. They should therefore be helped to improve and transform paddy cultivation activity for it to become one of their potential resources in the village, for example, 'financially capable farmers can be given the means to borrow and invest' (Bruns, 1993, p.1847) in paddy cultivation activity on their own initiatives and for the other villagers. In order to implement this idea, the roles of the CDD officials and the VDSC need to be restructured. First, at the state level, the CDD official needs to collaborate with the official from the MADA because paddy cultivation activity at village level is under the purview of the MADA. Collaboration between the agencies can minimise the delegation and patronage between the CDD officials and the VDSC which has existed in the village for a very long time. Second, at the village level, the government should utilise the existing MADA head unit leaders to work together with the VDSC (Platteau and Abraham, 2002). These leaders are under the MADA agency and responsible for disseminating information about paddy cultivation to the local villagers. Collaboration between the MADA head unit leader and the VDSC over utilising the paddy

cultivation activity to become one of their potential resources could therefore minimise the domination of the decision making by the VDSC and provide a check and balance on public participation in decision making at village level.

Overall, there are currently no effective strategies for the implementation of a public participation programme because it is specific to the context of the study (Eversole, 2010; Mansuri and Rao, 2004). Even so, this might be useful in helping future researchers to understand the lack of public participation in decision making and the possible structural changes which could be taken by the government to improve the participation programme in economic and development affairs based on the Malaysian context.

Limitations and directions for future research

There are three principal limitations of this study which should be taken into account in future research. First, this study sought to understand why some rural people participate and others do not. This led to the study of two specific cases in rural areas where the majority of the villagers were the rural poor, mainly from the Malay community. Even though Malay is the majority ethnicity regarded as poor in Malaysia, there are also other ethnic groups such as the Chinese and the Indians who live in rural areas and are regarded as poor. This study has only explored the Malay ethnic villages. Future research could therefore also examine the participation of the rural poor among other ethnic groups such as the Chinese and Indian populations.

Second, this study was limited to the Kedah state in the peninsular of Malaysia. Future research could therefore further examine the participation in decision making in other peninsular states which have implemented the GDW, and could expand the study by focusing on East Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak, which are considered as having high proportions of poor people. Study of the ethnicity, culture, religion and social contexts of these people might expand the understanding of public participation in the decision making, which might be different from that in peninsular Malaysia.

Third, the findings and the analysis of this study were focused on public participation in decision making in rural areas and the research was limited to rural areas only. The right to participate in decision making is not restricted to any specific areas but is a right of a democratic people. So future research could include urban areas as another field of study because poor people do not exist just in rural areas but also in urban areas. In urban areas, there are also high rates of urban poor and their public participation in decision making should also be considered.

Personal reflection

As a researcher who lives in a rural area in the northern part of Malaysia, I had always been interested to know the reason why people participate and do not participate in the decision making concerning their own economic and development affairs. The interest was developed while I was studying for my master's degree when I attended a summer course in Thailand. On that course I had visited one of the most outstanding public participation programmes introduced by the then government of Thailand known as a 'One Tambon One Product (OTOP)'. The interesting thing about that programme was that it had been accepted and actively participated in by local people in rural areas. So my interest in public participation in decision making began with my early experience as a student-cum-rural villager. Even though the GDW had very low participation by local people, huge amounts of resources still continued to be allocated in order to fund the supporting programmes and activities of the Programme. Facing this problem, I was intrigued to know why this situation had occurred and to find answers to the problem.

Since the research was related to the development I started with the literature on theories of development. My reviews started with literatures from the mainstream development theories particularly modernisation theory (Bernstein, 1971; Brohman, 1996; Larrain, 1989; Leys, 1996; Lewis, 1984; Lipton, 1988; Myrdal, 1971; Parsons, 1951; Preston, 1996; Rostow, 1960; Sachs, 2007; Seers, 1969) and dependency theory (Baran and Hobsbawm, 1961;

Frank, 1969; Laclau, 1973; Palma, 1978; Peet, 1971; Prebisch, 1964). However, from the review the mainstream development theories were deficient due to over-reliance on the state as the key player, growth maximisation and as such it was contested by the alternative development and the post-development approaches. I then began to review the literatures on alternative development and the post-development. The prominent literatures were referred to understand alternative development such as Friedmann (1992), Hettne (1995), Korten (1990), Nerfin (1977) and post-development such as Escobar (1984, 1988, 1995), Kothari (1990), Latouche (1993), Rahnema (1992) and Sachs, W. (1992). From these reviews, I found that the alternative and post-development theories were also been criticised along with the modernisation theory and dependency theory. This had led me to review other literatures and to search for the main development paradigms that led the development discourse in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. As such I started to review the main literatures that critique mainstream development, alternative development and post-development. I found that the critics came from the proponents of sustainable development, gender equality, democracy, human rights and freedoms and human development (Gasper and Gomez, 2015; Haq, 1995; Redclift, 1992; Sachs, W. 1992; Sen, 1999, p.xi; UNDP, 1994, 1995, 2000, 2002). I had identified several events which became the starting point for the rise of the new development paradigm such as the publication of the *Limits to Growth* report which concerned on sustainable development (Meadows *et al.*, 1972), the publication of *Adjustment With a Human Face* (Cornia and Stewart, 2014; Hulme and Turner, 1990) and the publication of the *Human Development Report* (HDR) in 1990 (Fukuda-Parr 2003; Haq, 1995; Ranis and Stewart, 2005). These reports criticised that the main goal of economic growth under the mainstream development theories had led to the negative impacts of people. From the reviews (Fukuda-Parr, 2003; Fukuda-Parr and McNeill, 2019; Stewart *et al.*, 2018a; Wiman, 2006), I found that a new development concept that away from the economic growth which was known as human development (HD) was introduced. The main idea of the HD was not developed to represent a breakup from economic growth, rather it was the outcome of a process of evolution in

ideas, policies and outcomes (Stewart, 2019). I found that there was a political compromise between both economic growth and human development (HD) (Ranis and Stewart, 2005; Ranis *et al.*, 2000; Suri *et al.*, 2011).

My reviews then continued with the rural development literature. I noticed that rural areas had been impacted severely from the economic policies developed under the mainstream development theories. These were seen from the increase of poverty rate and poor conditions of rural people (Alkire *et al.*, 2014; ASEAN, 2012; Balisacan, 2005; Binswanger, 1994; Chambers, 1983; Dixon, 1990; Harris, 2007; Lipton, 1988; Martin *et al.*, 2003; Ravallion *et al.*, 2007; Rigg, 2003; Olinto *et al.*, 2013; UNDESA, 2009). From there I rigorously reviewed the discourse on rural development and I found that the understanding of rural development can be divided into three important rural development strategies. First, in the post-war period rural poverty and the lack of development in rural areas were heavily focused on traditional agriculture. Several rural development strategies were therefore developed with the main focus of increasing agricultural productivity. Several prominent contributions were reviewed such as Griffin (1979), Henderink and Titus (1988), Ruttan (1984), Staatz and Eicher (1998). Second, rural development strategies under the structural adjustment period were introduced (Easterly, 2005; Harvey, 2005; Haque, 1999, 2008) and it was found that the introduction of the programme had worsened the condition of rural poor. The reviews from Banerjee-Guha (2013), Gonzalez (2004), Patnaik (2007), Portes (1997) and Rodrik (1990) showed the evidence of the negative impacts of the programme. Third, the literature reviews on rural development strategies under the people-centred development approach found that the focus on rural development was on people (Chambers, 1983, 1994, 1997; Cornwall and Brock, 2005; Nelson and Wright, 1995; Oakley, 1991; Uphoff, 1992; Ziai, 2011). When I further read around people-centred development I found that the current rural development trend since the post-war period can be segregated into two paradigms: first, a people's paradigm which emphasised engaging people in their own development such as in participatory development; and second, the paradigm of the continuation of economic growth which was incorporated into

PRSPs and MDGs/SDGs (Bradshaw and Linneker, 2003; Cornwall and Brock, 2005; Craig and Porter, 2003; DESA, 2016; Hulme, 2009, 2010; Kamruzzaman, 2009; McGee *et al.*, 2002; United Nations, 2017; World Bank, 2001, 2004) and have been implemented through decentralisation process (Bee, 2019; Fischer and Ali, 2019; Manor, 1999; Kvartiuk and Curtiss, 2019; Musgrave and Wong, 2016; Parker, 1995; Rondinelli, 1981; Sutiyo and Maharjan, 2017). These trends helped me to trace the origins of public participation in decision making.

So, I began to review the literature pertaining to participation. There were many discussions on participation in decision making process, but my focus was more on participation in decision making and economic development process. The review started with the Arnstein's ladder of participation (1969), followed by Pateman (1970) on participatory democracy, a typology of participation by Pretty (1995) and interests in participation by White (1996). However, these were insufficient to explain and understand the lack of public participation in decision making process. These theories especially the commonly used ladder of participation was unable to explain how progression through the stages of ladder can be prevented by social cultural, and power relations that existed at a local level, thus contributed to the lack of participation and disempowerment (Bardhan, 2002; Cooke, 2004; Kothari, 2001; Michener, 1998; Oakley, 1991; Ribot, 1993; Platteau and Abraham, 2002). Given this apparent gap, I started to review literatures on power relations in participation (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Nelson and Wright, 1995; Mosse, 2001; Narayanan, 2003; Oakley, 1991) and this had led to the reviews on theories of power and empowerment from various perspectives such as 'power over' by Lukes (1974, 2005), Bachrach and Baratz (1962) and Dahl (1957). Not only that, the literatures on alternative to power over such as 'power to' was also reviewed (Arendt, 1970, 1986; Freire, 1970, 1993, 2000; Habermas *et al.*, 1977). The reviews on theories of power had led to the reviews on empowerment in the twenty-first century that focused on capability approach (Alkire and Deneulin, 2009; Bonvin *et al.*, 2018; Dreze and Sen, 2002; Hammock, 2019; Herrmann, 2012; Kramm, 2019; Middlemiss *et al.*, 2019; Robeyns, 2005; Saguin, 2018; Sen, 1980, 1999; Szekely and Mason, 2019;

Van der Maesen and Walker, 2012). These reviews of participation, power and empowerment theories had revealed that the lack of public participation in decision making was the outcome of several contributory factors that related to the social relational components and power within a society.

After rigorous reviews of theories of development, rural development, participation, power and empowerment, I found that to understand the lack of public participation needed an appropriate methodology to allow the understanding of the problem specifically in Malaysia's context. As revealed by the theories of development and rural development, the standard economic models used by the development economists such as the rational choice theory (Green and Shapiro, 1994; Hindmoor, 2010; Ordeshook, 1993) and the socio-economic status (SES) model (Brady *et al.*, 1995; Leighley, 1995; Verba and Nie, 1972; Verba *et al.*, 1995), typically relied on material facts or sufficient information to explain any outcomes and they were insufficient to explain the complex participation in decision making in Malaysia (Chapter 6). Most of these economic and development models have ignored the important role of political economy and the integration between the political and economic perspectives in shaping policy development, its implementation and the practice of participation at the local level. This is especially relevant but has been downplayed in the context of Malaysia. As such, the political economy theory was the most appropriate basis for the methodology of my research because it enabled us to understand the specific problem which this research was designed to address (Abdelal, 2009; Furlong and Marsh, 2010; Hindmoor, 2010; Navaro *et al.*, 2015; Parsons, 2010; Rigg, 1991; Ruggie, 1998; Sackrey *et al.*, 2013). After that I started to think about who I should approach, who my potential participants should be, how could I collect the necessary data from them and where I should collect it. This required me to look back at the research problem and the methodology, and that made me realise that a qualitative research method would be the most appropriate research methodology to use (Bevir and Rhodes, 2002; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Bryman, 2006, 2012; Creswell, 2003, 2007, 2009; Flick, 2014; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Mason, 2002; Neuman, 1997; Patton, 2002; Yin,

2014) (Chapter 6). After the methodology and method had been decided, my fieldwork research had started and it took approximately three months to complete.

Based on the findings of the research, I found that the lack of public participation in the GDW was certainly due to a failure to understand the interactions, interpretations and decisions of actors at the three levels during the development of the policy (Corbett and Walker, 2013; Harvey, 2007; Haque, 2008; Kakumba, 2010; Neshkova, 2014; Walker, 2005, 2018) and the process of participation and implementation at the local level (Korten, 1982) and its relation to the power relation within the villages (Arendt's, 1956, 1970, 1986; Freire, 1970 and Sen, 1980, 1999). Indeed, this study has demonstrated that the theories of power and empowerment and the political economy perspective help us to see how and why there was lack of public participation and empowerment between villages in the GDW in Malaysia. The findings discussed (Chapter 9) revealed that the GDW had failed to facilitate public participation in decision making. The failure of the public participation programme was a consequence of several key contributory factors which were interrelated at the three critical levels, the macro, meso and micro. As such, the research processes which I experienced enabled me to answer the research questions. Based on these experiences and the findings of this study, several strategies had been suggested and utilised by Malaysia in the implementation of the decentralisation of necessary authority, public participation and empowerment at local level.

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