

LANGUAGE, GENDER AND SUSTAINABILITY (LAGSUS)

– A short Summary: The role of language use and institution building in international development projects

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The primary goal of the LAGSUS 1 project (July 2003 to June 2006) was the analysis of the role of local languages in development discourse, in order to demonstrate the existence of a communicative sustainability, which can be taken as a means of implementing innovative concepts into local structures.

The research area of the Indonesian sub-project of LAGSUS 1 is located around the borders of the Lore Lindu National Park (LLNP), which was officially launched in 1993. Since the initiation of the National Park everyday life in the over 60 villages at the border of the National Park has changed dramatically. The use of natural resources within the National Park's boundaries, a traditional source of income, was strongly restricted. This loss of income was to be compensated by an Asian – Development - Bank (ADB) – funded development project carried out by the National Planning Organization BAPPEDA of Indonesia. The main target of the project was the diversification of the economy of the concerned villages in order to establish a sustainable development. New ideas and concepts, as sustainability itself, had to be made part of the process in order to reach the desired aim of a sustainable development and the acceptance by the local population of the villages to fulfill this requirement. Due

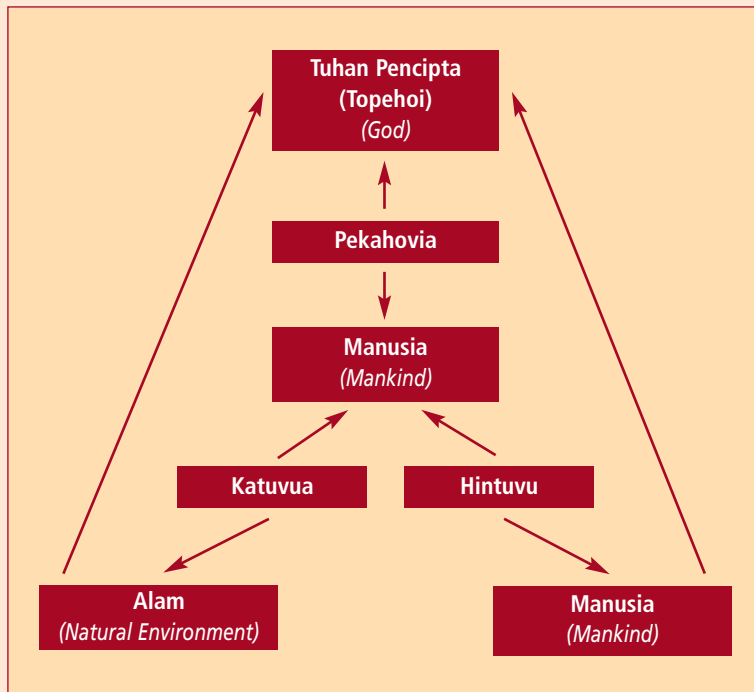
to different demographic structures of the villages around the boundary of the Lore Lindu National Park, the existence of a variety of different discourse strategies could be established during the first project phase from July 2003 to June 2005. There are villages where local discourse has no association to the target of a sustainable development at all. The continued use of the natural resources is therefore – more or less – the natural consequence of the lack of discussion about new ways of earning a living. In most villages people do understand the necessity of new concepts needed due to the restricted use of the natural resources. However, the lack of organizational processes within these villages impedes changes which would encourage the necessary acceptance by the village population in order to create a sustainable development. In Toro, one of the villages on the western border of the National Park, important organizational processes like local organizations as agents of change, the use of local knowledge and the acquisition, dissemination, and utilization of new knowledge to incorporate new concepts, can be observed (Fremerey 2002:1). In the village of Toro the traditional consensus finding system of musyawarah (the discussion) and mufakat (the consensus) has been consciously reactivated to promote a sustainable development and to initiate the acceptance by the local population through a step by step process of the dissemination of

new ideas and concepts through local discourse strategies. First results clearly show a correlation between discourse patterns in the local language and sustainable development on communicative, economic, and ecologic levels, with the communicative sustainability as a prerequisite in order to reach "higher" levels of sustainable development. Innovative concepts and new terminologies, as the notion of sustainability itself, are to be incorporated into the local language and into local structures to be

viewed could not respond to the Indonesian term. In Toro, the notion of sustainability has been integrated into a tradition-based triangle which describes social, religious and environmental relations, and is therefore tangible by most members of the village society.

Respondents know about the concept of sustainable development and are able to discuss this matter. This demonstrates clearly the importance of the local language

in transferring innovative concepts from a given development source language (i.e. sustainability, pelestarian) to a specific development target language (i.e. katuva). It also shows, conclusively, the necessary incorporation of innovative concepts into existing, although unused, local structures. Further key factors in securing the incorporation of innovative concepts and terminologies are good leadership, vision, equal rights of the sexes and the guaranteed participation in the decision making processes, all



come part of the local knowledge and local action taking. The notion of „sustainability“ is in Bahasa Indonesia, the national language of Indonesia, phrased as pelestarian. The analysis of interviews carried out in the target region of the Kaili sub-project clearly shows that those inter-

of which can be documented in the village of Toro. Thus, Fremerey (2002:1) comes to the conclusion, that "in terms of acquisition, dissemination and utilization of knowledge, (Toro) shows good promise to develop an organizational learning pattern, which comes up to the prerequi-

sites of sustainable development". Still, the analysis of the collected data gives strong evidence that the idea of sustainability in a village like Toro does not concur with the internationally accepted definition of this term. Economic requirements will automatically lead to an abuse of the natural resources of the National Park's area once the next generation need their own land to grow rice on – the number one crop to secure the daily demands of village life. However, the progress in establishing a local community with organizational skills like Toro, which "takes care" of its own future, has initiated the setting up of foundations to cope with the rising problems. Toro is building up a local Credit Union to help solve the economic problems by diversifying the economic basis through division of labor and new local enterprises.

Evidence based on collected data from villages with no organizational patterns, as in the described progress in Toro, suggest that, indeed, the use of the local language, as a means of communicating and adapting innovative concepts, is the primary tool for creating developmental discourse. In order to achieve the wished-for goal – i.e. sustainable development – the use of local structures, local organizations, and the dissemination and utilization of the externally and internally enhanced local knowledge, need to be taken into account.

Outlook for further research

The summary of the preliminary results of LAGSUS 1 shows, impressively, that the adoption of externally and internally triggered innovative concepts into local patterns, like local knowledge and local language, stimulates a broader acceptance by the local population and a greater willingness to participate in developmental discourse strategies – provided that the process of the dissemination and utilization of knowledge is part of the organizational learning process of a community. Fremerey (2002) has come to the conclusion that Toro is a community where this process is evidently noticeable. Other researchers draw the same conclusions. Shohibuddin concurs with this assumption by emphasizing that Toro is in the process of a „redefinition of cultural meanings and values“ to reach this goal through a locally defined action pattern (refer to Fremerey 2002:13). Mappatoba (2004) as well as Birner and Mappatoba (2004) add evidence to the ongoing process of organizational learning in Toro. Toro was one of three initial villages where a community agreement was set up to manage common pool resources inde-

pendently. The governance of common pool resources is a prerequisite part of the process to „develop an organizational learning pattern, which comes up to the prerequisites of sustainable environmental management“ (Fremerey 2002:1).

Our research project has shown that a communication device (like the renaissance of the traditional musyawarah system in Toro) for discussing and disseminating village-relevant knowledge is an additional prerequisite in securing the intended goals (compare above and Wickl 2005a:58-63; Wickl 2005b:113-116). However, the incorporation of innovative concepts into local structures (Miehlau und Wickl 2005b), perspectives, organizational learning patterns, communication devices, and the acquisition, dissemination, and utilization of knowledge, are not sufficient to create an environmental consciousness of a community whose goal is the preservation of the biodiversity of the National Park's resources, and to maintain a sustainable development. They only set the fundament for a broader participation of the local population in the decision making process without guaranteeing the necessary access for the complete social strata. The elite of Toro are aware of the problem of the dissemination of knowledge on a wider participatory scheme in order to get the necessary acceptance by the majority of the village population. Toro is currently in the process of establishing local institutions as a means of disseminating and discussing new concepts in order to involve the entire village community. Miehlau and Wickl. (2005a:55-58) have confirmed the influence of the woman's organization of Toro as a device for the empowerment of women and their growing participation in the decision making process of this village. Although equal rights of women and the organization itself are still not accepted by wider circles of the village population, especially among the men, relevant topics regarding the new role and position of women within the village community are controversially discussed, which in itself is a novum to the village of Toro and an overt sign for social change, triggered by the very creation and the very existence of the local institutions. Changes in the attitude of men towards the empowerment of women, expressed through new and different discourse patterns, need to be analyzed in relation to the emerging forces of local institutions, which may trigger the change and progress of communication situations and strengthen the acceptance of innovative concepts.

Further research should, therefore, focus on the step by step setting up of local institutions and their networking

as a democratically orientated participatory system. The influence of local institutions on the participation of the majority of the village populations around the Lore Lindu National Park is to be highlighted by a differentiated and contrastive analysis carried out in socially and demographically differing villages. Developmental stages in a progressive village like Toro need to be compared to villages where there are communication and learning devices less detectable but still present and being constantly developed. This analysis should shed some light on the influence of local institutions on participation. Local parallel discourses about the progress of their merging with or diverging from one another should also be taken into account. Evidence from field research suggests that the existence of a wide variety of local institutions that pave the way for a significant participation of the local population in the decision making process also trigger controversial discourses within a community on a more democratic level. In the long run, this renaissance of the traditional musyawarah-system, which was the primary step in promoting innovative concepts within the village community of Toro, could create democratic ways of decision making and political participation. The development of these new political systems, i.e. the renaissance of the musyawarah-system and western-style orientated democratic decision making processes, might lead to a discussion about the local political foundations. This, in turn, might lead to competitive political systems, which are again subject to local dis-

course. Interview sequences of LAGSUS 1 initially show that both systems are favored by different groups among the local population of Toro. The head of the adat council, himself a member of the local government, seeks a strengthened position of the traditional system of decision making, whereas most other elected members of the village government prefer a move to decisions taken by vote. The longitudinal evaluation of the discourse strategies in regard to the evolution of the local political system in Toro will be part of the LAGSUS 2 field research. In addition to the observation of the evolutionary steps of the political foundations in Toro, the development within this village needs to be set apart from other villages around the boundaries of the Lore Lindu National Park in order to reach a higher level of understanding, under what circumstances political change is triggered. ■

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■ Co-Publisher and Editor in Chief of
"SüdostasienMagazin"

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