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Advancing While Weakening The Village: Village Colonization Development and Modernization

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Abstract: Abstract. This article examines the paradox of village development and modernization in Indonesia which, instead of strengthening, weakens village sovereignty. Departing from the statement that villages must be "urbanized" to be advanced, this research views the narrative as a reproduction of the logic of modernization and colonialism that places the city as the standard of progress. Using the framework of governmentality (Foucault) and Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough), this study unravels the process of village colonization in three phases: the formation of discourse/knowledge, the formation of values and norms, and the formation of actions/behaviors. Data was obtained through a literature review of books, journals, and policy documents combined with dialectics on village reality. The findings show that the discourse on village development is colored by the technicalization of the problem, where underdevelopment is seen as a technical problem such as low human resources that can be solved through training or technology, while eliminating the political and structural dimensions of inequality. This discourse is institutionalized into a norm that internalizes the values of efficiency, productivity, and entrepreneurship as a measure of progress. The final stage can be seen in development practices that direct villages to become obedient beneficiaries, thereby strengthening the top-down power relationship. This analysis concludes that village development within the framework of governmentality is a power mechanism that works productively and forms knowledge, normalizes values, and regulates behavior that subtly but systematically maintains village subordination. The study offers a critical reading to open up space for development alternatives rooted in local sovereignty and potential.

Keywords: Development, Modernization, Governmentality, Village, Colonization

Indtroduction

At the 2022 public lecture at the Village Community Development College "APMD", a public official made a sentence: "*if the village wants to be advanced and modern, it must be urbanized*". The statement reflects a development paradigm that has long been rooted in public policy and discourse in Indonesia. This view represents a classical modernization logic that positions the city as the pinnacle of progress, the center of civilization, and a symbol of modernity, while the village is perceived as an abandoned, traditional, and needing to be "improved" through a process of assimilation to the city. Implicitly, this statement reproduces a spatial hierarchy, city above village that is a long legacy of colonialism and the politics of post-colonial development (Escobar, 1995; Scott, 1998).

The logic of "taping" villages departs from the assumption that progress can be measured through urban indicators: massive physical infrastructure, industrialization, consumptive lifestyles, and spatial patterns that follow urban models. This perspective ignores the fact that villages have different knowledge systems, social structures, and economic bases than cities. Instead of seeing this difference as wealth, the modernist paradigm actually assesses it as a deficiency that must be eliminated (Rigg, 2006). Thus, the discourse of "trolling the village" is a form *of epistemic violence* (Spivak, 1994), in which local identities and practices are ignored in favor of a single narrative of progress. The statement "villages must be urbanized" also affirms that development is understood as a linear process: from traditional to modern, from village to city. This mindset ignores the possibility of alternative development paths rooted in local values and potential, such as solidarity-based development, a shared economy, and sustainable ecology. Thus, this narrative is not only exclusive but also closes the space for the independent political and economic imagination of the village.

The orientalist-modernist view of the village is inspired by the paradigm of colonialism and developmentalism that shapes the discourse of development as the process of advancing the village through "colonization". Colonization, in a broad sense, refers to the practice of occupation, control, and engineering of territory and society by external forces. In the contemporary context, colonization is not always physical; It can be present in the form of policy interventions, rearrangement of living spaces, and discipline of the way of thinking of local communities. Meanwhile, developmentalism is a theory about development towards progress and industrialization for developing countries. This approach assumes that developing countries need to follow the development model that has been implemented by developed countries to achieve progress "*from underdeveloped to developed*". If drawn in the context of the village, advancing the village is interpreted as a gradual process of making the village like a city by abandoning traditional values towards a modern civilization with technology, innovation, and contemporary lifestyle. Underdeveloped, traditional and poor villages must be

helped to catch up with the adjustment of the standards and paradigms of modernity that the city has.

But in fact, the dominance of technology- and science-based solutions applied to realize scientific villages is trapped in technocratization: 1) technocratic decisions by experts or outside institutions that may not fully understand the social, economic, or cultural context of the village so that policies and programs are irrelevant to the needs or capabilities of the village community; 2) the technology or scientific method chosen to be applied in the village is not always in accordance with the circumstances or resources existing in the village, resulting in failure or long-term dependence on external parties; 3) The science-based modernization process often ignores the local values and wisdom of the village community and is even considered archaic and irrelevant. Only prioritizing technology mastered by outsiders who are considered more 'educated' or 'competent' without considering the local context, cultural values, and uniqueness of the village has the potential to erode village sovereignty.

One example of a scientific village is Logandeng Village, Kapanewon Playen, Gunungkidul Regency which received an award as the First Winner of the Istimwa Yogyakarta Regional Village Competition and the Second Winner of the Java-Bali regional level in 2023 (https://www.krjogja.com/nasional). One of the standardizations in the assessment is the use of IT technology in public service innovation. Instead of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of services, service application users have not reached 30% of all local residents. The village head said: "*the majority of the people of Logandeng are more stable in 'gathering' to meet directly with the Village Head and the village officials*". This sentence illustrates that technology-based public service innovations are not in accordance with the needs of the local community. Furthermore, the achievements achieved make Logandeng Village a potential target for investors. In recent years, more and more investors engaged in hospitality and housing development have arrived. On the one hand, this has the potential to increase village income, but on the other hand, it also has the potential to cause losses and exclusion of local communities, especially related to the issue of land ownership and environmental damage.

Development and modernization, which is believed to be a way to advance the village, does not always lead to the strengthening of village sovereignty. Instead of creating politically, economically, and socially strong villages, development projects often run in a top-down logic that places the village as an object of intervention, rather than a subject of direction for change. Modernization brings a package of knowledge, values, and practices that often ignore local capacities and existing social structures, thus replacing village self-regulation mechanisms with state administrative and regulatory systems. As a result, village sovereignty is eroded through dependence on external resources, uniformity of governance, and internalization of development values that reflect more of the vision of the state and market than the aspirations of the villagers themselves.

Based on the background of the above problems, the formulation of this research question is: 'How do development and modernization work to advance and weaken villages?' Therefore, it is important to examine the narrative of village development and modernization through a critical lens that dismantles the power relations behind it. The *Critical Discourse Analysis* approach can reveal how language, policies, and development practices shape views about villages, while highlighting how these views affect village policies and socio-economic life. By unraveling this construction of discourse, we can see that "advancing" the village within the framework of modern development often also means "weakening" the sovereignty, identity, and livelihood system of the village itself.

Research Methods

This research uses *the governmentality* approach as developed by Michel Foucault (1991) as the main conceptual framework. *Governmentality* views power not only as a form of repression imposed from above, but also as a mechanism that works through the formation of people's ways of thinking, values, and behavior. In the context of village development, this approach allows researchers to unravel how the discourse of "advancing" villages can actually simultaneously "weaken" villages through a subtle and continuous process of colonization.

The *governmentality* framework in this study is operationalized through three phases of analysis:

1) Discourse/Knowledge Formation

This phase analyzes how the narrative of development and modernization frames villages as "underdeveloped," "traditional," and "less productive" through language and discourse. The data were analyzed to identify the *keywords*, metaphors, and visual representations used to contrast villages with cities. This approach follows Escobar's (1995) view that development is a *regime of representation* that shapes the perspective of "developed" and "underdeveloped." At this stage, *Critical Discourse Analysis* (Fairclough, 1995) is used to trace the relationship between language choice and the power structures that produce knowledge about villages.

2) Value and Norm Formation

Once the discourse is formed, the next stage is to trace how the discourse is institutionalized into social values and norms. For example, the idea that villages must imitate the city model to become "advanced" can be embodied in village performance indicators, village apparatus training curricula, or development targets based on urban standards. The analysis in this phase highlights the process of normalization, i.e. how certain standards are seen as reasonable and legitimate, while other alternatives are considered irrational or

unmodern (Rose, 1999). The CDA is used to dissect policy texts, technical guidelines, and village regulations to see how the values of modernity and productivity are reproduced.

3) Formation of Actions/Behaviors

The last phase examines how these discourses and values affect the behavior of village actors and real policies on the ground. For example, the policy of converting agricultural land into industrial or tourist areas, the adoption of certain agricultural technologies, or the transfer of village labor to the urban sector. In this phase, *governmentality* is understood as the process of internalizing power, in which villagers, officials, and policy makers govern themselves according to established norms (Dean, 2010). CDA is used to connect discourse representations with concrete practices, for example by comparing official narratives and actual impacts on the ground.

Data collection in this study was carried out through a literature review that includes academic books, scientific journal articles, and relevant policy documents, in order to obtain a strong theoretical and conceptual foundation. This study is combined with dialectics on village reality, which is a dialogical and reflective process between literature findings and factual conditions that occur in the field. This approach allows researchers to not only understand the discourse of development and modernization from the perspective of texts and theories, but also to test and interpret them through concrete experiences, social dynamics, and village government practices. Thus, data collection is integrative and combines the wealth of written knowledge with a critical reading of the real situation so as to produce a more in-depth analysis of the village colonization process within the framework of development.

Results and Discussion

Development and modernization are often positioned as universal projects that aim to bring progress to the entire society. However, behind this rhetoric of progress, there is a narrative that systematically places villages in a subordinate position compared to cities. The narrative is not neutral, but is loaded with discourse constructions that contain historical, political, and ideological biases. In this construction, the village is often described as a "backward," "traditional," and "primitive" space, while the city is idealized as a center of "progress," "modernity," and "civilization" (Escobar, 1995; Ferguson, 1994).

This construction is rooted in colonial logic that since colonial times viewed the city as the center of colonial power and administration, as well as a symbol of Western-style progress, while the village is positioned as a hinterland that serves to support the economic, labor, and resource needs of the city (Breman, 1988). This

colonial view formed a spatial and cultural hierarchy that persisted into the post-colonial era, although its form is now wrapped in the language of development and modernization (Sachs, 1992). Within the framework of modernization theory that developed in the mid-20th century, progress is often understood as a linear process that moves from "traditional" to "modern" society (Rostow, 1960). The stages of development initiated by W. W. Rostow, for example, place industrialization, urbanization, and economic rationalization as the main indicators of development success. This model not only ignores the socio-cultural uniqueness of the village, but also assumes that the village will and must "become like a city" in order to be considered advanced. In other words, modernization is imagined as the process of "urbanizing" the village (McMichael, 2012).

In Indonesia, the legacy of this colonial and modernist discourse is embodied in various village development policies. Programs such as transmigration, agricultural intensification, and tourism villages are often designed with the assumption that villages need to be "intervened" to conform to the standards of modernity imported from cities or even from the model of industrial countries (Li, 2007). In this narrative, villages are rarely seen as entities that have an independent system of knowledge, economy, and governance; rather, villages are seen as objects that require "construction," "structuring," and "capacity building" according to the vision of national development (Antlöv, 2003).

The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach views that the language and narrative of development are not just representations of reality, but instruments of power that shape reality itself (Fairclough, 1995). Through language, the concept of "progress" is monopolized by certain definitions that favor the dominant group, in this case state actors, markets, and urban elites, while marginalizing the definition of progress that may come from the village community itself. For example, the term "disadvantaged village" implicitly sets the city's benchmark as the ideal standard without questioning whether the standard is relevant or desired by villagers (Li, 2014).

This narrative that advances while weakening the village works through several mechanisms. First, stereotyping, villages are positioned as spaces that are synonymous with underdevelopment, poverty, and inefficiency. This labeling justifies external intervention in the name of improvement and modernization (Scott, 1998). Second, romanticization, the village is also often described as a "natural" and "authentic" space, but this image is often used to commodify the village, for example through tourism which actually changes its social and economic structure to depend on the logic of the market (Hall, 2005). Third, instrumentalization, villages are used as providers of resources, cheap labor, and production land for the benefit of the city, while the resulting economic surplus often flows out of the village (White, 2012).

The urbanization process also strengthens the gap between cities and villages. Urbanization is often promoted as an indicator of development success, even though it also creates a biased urban pattern that centralizes investment, infrastructure, and public services in the city (Lipton, 1977). Villages are areas that experience resource drainage, loss of productive human resources and sometimes also land loss due to land conversion for city-based industries or properties. As a result, although the official narrative mentions village development as a priority, in practice villages remain subordinatively integrated in the national and global political economy (Harvey, 2005).

In the context of globalization, the narrative of village modernization is increasingly connected to the discourse of sustainable development. Although the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) claim to respect local wisdom, the indicators are still based on a capitalistic global economic growth framework (Ziai, 2015). This makes villages often forced to adjust to performance indicators that do not fully reflect local realities and priorities. Thus, village development within this framework is not entirely "empowerment," but rather continues the pattern of colonization through standardization and supervision (Foucault, 1991).

Perspective on the Village

Discourse analysis conducted on policy documents, literature, and public discourse shows that there are three dominant perspectives on villages, each with different assumptions, visions, and policy implications. These three perspectives, existentialist localists, modernist orientalists, and radical structuralists, do not exist in a vacuum, but interact with each other, compete, and sometimes overlap in village development practices.

a) Localist-Existentialist

The localist-existentialist perspective emphasizes the recognition of the village as an entity that has its own history, identity, and knowledge system. This view sees the village not only as an object of development, but as a subject with local sovereignty that should be defended. In this perspective, development should ideally be *endogenous*, based on local resources and wisdom, and prioritize socio-cultural sustainability (Eko, 2014). For example, organic farming practices developed collectively by local communities are seen as a form of progress that is relevant to the village context, although it does not always correspond to national productivity indicators. This view is in line with post-development thinking that rejects the universalization of the Western model of development (Escobar, 1995). The localist-existentialist discourse also challenges the modernization paradigm that considers villages to be "underdeveloped," by asserting that villages have intrinsic value that cannot be

measured solely by global economic standards.

b) Orientalist-Modernist

On the contrary, the orientalist-modernist perspective positions the village as a "traditional" space that must be modernized to be parallel to the city. This view is still strong in public policy and national development programs. Its main feature is the emphasis on the urbanization of values and practices: the mechanization of agriculture, the industrialization of rural areas, the transformation of work structures, and the adoption of modern technologies. This view is in line with Rostow's (1960) modernization theory which views development as a linear process towards *take-off*. Villages, in this perspective, are considered successful if they are able to "catch up" with the city in terms of infrastructure, productivity, and lifestyle. However, the analysis shows that this paradigm often ignores the diversity of the socio-cultural context of the village and instead deepens the dependence of the village on the market and external actors (Li, 2007). Orientalists-modernists also maintained the city-village dichotomy inherited from colonial logic, in which the city was considered the center of progress and the village as a resource-providing hinterland (Breman, 1988).

c) Structuralist-Radical

The radical structuralist perspective focuses on the analysis of power relations and the political economic structure that shapes the position of the village. In this perspective, rural backwardness is not seen as the result of internal weakness or lack of modernization, but rather as the result of historical inequality structures, including colonialism, capitalism, and urban bias (Lipton, 1977). This approach emphasizes that village liberation requires structural transformation, agrarian reform, resource redistribution, and democratization of governance, not just the transfer of technology or capital from the city. Thus, this perspective is political and confrontational against the forces that maintain village subordination. In the Indonesian context, this view also appears in civil society movements and agrarian activists who criticize village development that is too integrated into the logic of the global market, thus sacrificing food sovereignty and village land (Eko, 2014; White, 2012).

The discussion of the phase of village colonization becomes important when we understand that the perspective of the village, as a hometown, the lowest administrative unit, or a "small country", does not stand neutral but forms the framework of development policies and practices. When bureaucratic and technocratic perspectives dominate, the village is slowly reduced to an object that must be regulated, supervised, and adjusted to the logic of the state. This process takes place not only through legal instruments and development programs, but also through the formation of a discourse that places villages as disadvantaged entities that need to be changed

according to the standards of urban modernity. This is where village colonization works, a historical and contemporary process in which the state utilizes development as a mechanism for power penetration, changing the socioeconomic order, values, and behavior of the village to align with the interests of the center.

First Phase: Discourse Formation

Critical Discourse Analysis of village development policy documents, training modules, and official government publications shows that one of the main characteristics of the development and modernization discourse in Indonesia is the technologization of development problems. In this discourse, village problems such as underdevelopment, poverty, and "traditionalism" are reduced to technical problems that can be overcome through program, training, and technological interventions, as if independent of the political, historical, and power relations dimensions (Ferguson, 1994).

This technicalization works by framing the village problem as a measurable "deficit" that can be solved with solutions that have been formulated in a standard. For example, when a village is considered to be underdeveloped, the indicators used are often based on quantitative data such as poverty rates, literacy rates, or infrastructure ownership. This approach ignores the fact that rural underdevelopment is often the result of a long historical process, including unequal agrarian policies, centralization of resources, or urban-centric development bias (Lipton, 1977; Li, 2007).

The product of knowledge born from this discourse is partial, it separates the problem from its political context. By eliminating the political dimension, the discourse of village development avoids fundamental questions such as: *Who benefits from this development? Why is the structure of land ownership in villages uneven? Why does the allocation of village funds follow certain standards set by the central government?* On the contrary, this discourse produces a diagnosis that seems simple, for example, that villages are poor due to low human resources (HR), so the solution is skill training or *capacity building* (Eko, 2014).

Concrete examples of this pattern can be found in response to the problem of inequality arising from development. Instead of seeing inequality as a result of urban-biased and pro-market development models, the official narrative tends to blame the low *entrepreneurial capacity* of rural communities. The solutions offered are usually in the form of business training, the provision of access to credit, or the formation of productive business groups. While these measures may be beneficial at the individual level, they also mask the structural roots of inequality, such as market dependence, distribution monopolies, and the weak bargaining position of small farmers (Scott, 1998).

By utilizing the framework of governmentality, this technicalization can be understood as a form of behavior regulation through knowledge. The discourse of development not only describes reality, but also produces reality by establishing categories, indicators, and procedures that govern how the village views itself and how it "should" improve (Foucault, 1991). Within the framework of the CDA, this can be seen in the use of technical vocabulary such as "capacity building," "human resource strengthening," and "economic transformation" that give the impression of being objective and neutral, even though they contain certain values that benefit the existing power structure (Fairclough, 1995).

As a result, this discourse creates a paradox. On the one hand, it promises quick solutions that can be implemented through development projects. On the other hand, he maintains the subordination of the village because it does not touch the real root of the problem. By emphasizing technical solutions and ignoring the political dimension, the discourse of development and modernization becomes an effective tool of depoliticization, making structural problems look like mere managerial problems (Ferguson, 1994; Li, 2007).

Second Phase: Value Formation and Norms

The discourse on the technicalization of village development, as described earlier, does not stop at the level of knowledge production that frames village problems as technical matters. Within the framework *of governmentality*, this discourse serves as a prerequisite for the next phase: the formation of values and norms that naturalize the subordination of the village by the state and the logic of modernist development. This phase can be understood as a form of *normative governmentality*, in which power works not only through formal regulation, but also through the internalization of the values that define what is considered "progress" and "regression" (Foucault, 1991; Li, 2007).

This transition process begins when identified technical problems such as low human resource capacity, technological limitations, or weak economic competitiveness translate into normative targets. For example, when village development is faced with the problem of economic inequality, the dominant narrative does not examine the structure of inequality created by central-regional relations or resource distribution, but rather directs the cause to the weak *entrepreneurial mindset* of villagers. At this point, "*entrepreneurship*" becomes a norm that must be internalized by the village community as a measure of success, as if progress can be achieved only by changing individual behavior without touching the structural root of the problem (Sutoro Eko, 2018; Ferguson, 1994).

This is where *governmentality* works: new values such as efficiency, financial independence, and productivity are positioned as undeniable *common sense*. Villagers who refuse or fail to internalize these values

are often labeled as "unwilling to progress," "overly dependent," or "anti-change." Through this process, state power becomes more subtle but effective, because subjugation no longer has to be done by physical coercion, but through the formation of *subjectivity* or the way citizens view themselves and their world (Dean, 2010).

Although it seems persuasive, this phase still leaves coercive and repressive elements. The state uses policy instruments, regulations, and administrative sanctions to ensure that development values are widely adopted. For example, the distribution of Village Funds is often tied to the condition that the implementation of certain programs is in line with the logic of modernist development, even though it is not in accordance with the priorities of the needs of the local community. In addition, village performance indicators in various evaluation schemes (e.g. *the Building Village Index* or SAKIP) are compiled based on parameters that are biased by the city and the market, thus forcing villages to adjust to external norms (Antlöv, Wetterberg, & Dharmawan, 2016).

Thus, the formation of values and norms is not just a logical continuation of the technicalization of the problem, but is a mechanism for strengthening state control over the village. *Governmentality* in this phase ensures that the discourse of "advancing while weakening" the village remains sustainable, because the community itself is trained to view "progress" through the lens of modernist development that benefits the existing power structure.

Third Phase: Action/Behavior Formation

If the previous phase shapes *the way of thinking* (technicalization discourse) and *the way of judging* (values & norms), then this third phase is the stage where the logic is translated into *the way the* village community acts. In the framework of *governmentality*, this is the moment where power operates through the conduct *of conduct*, which regulates how individuals and communities manage their lives according to the goals of the state (Foucault, 1991; Dean, 2010).

This process is clearly seen in the implementation of village development projects. Programs designed by countries (or donor agencies) bring with them a pre-packaged set of procedures, indicators, and forms of participation. Village communities are directed to become *beneficiaries* who comply with program design, instead of productive subjects who formulate, manage, and utilize resources according to their context. This status as a "recipient" creates an asymmetrical power relationship: the village becomes the object of development intervention, while the planning, control, and evaluation authority remains in the hands of the state or external parties.

Compliance is manifested through administrative mechanisms such as strict accountability reports,

financial audits, and the fulfillment of performance indicators determined from the top down. In fact, the form of community participation is often reduced to attendance in ceremonial deliberations, where the choice is limited by the available program packages. This is in line with Ferguson's (1994) findings about *the anti-political machine*, where development eliminates the space for political debate and replaces it with technical and administrative affairs.

At this point, *governmentality* reaches its most concrete form: the behavior of the village community is organized in such a way that they operate within a framework of obedience, while at the same time voluntarily reproducing the existing patterns of power relations. For example, in the Village Fund distribution scheme, the community not only follows the procedures for the implementation of physical projects, but also internalizes the idea that "progress" is measured by the success of completing projects according to the guidelines, not from the increase in self-reliance or economic independence.

By implication, villages are trapped in a *recipient-oriented* development logic, which preserves their position as recipients of aid rather than creators or managers of resources. In this way, state power not only governs from the outside, but also "governs from within" by forming *subjectivities* that are obedient, administrative, and consumptive to the development package that comes from above. This process locks the potential of the village as an autonomous political and economic agent, while ensuring the sustainability of the dependency structure.

Conclusion

The governmentality-CDA *analysis framework* used in this study allows a complete reading of the village colonization process through development. By combining the dimensions of *governmentality* (Foucault, 1991; Dean, 2010) and discourse reading strategies in the style of *Critical Discourse Analysis* (Fairclough, 1992; van Dijk, 1993), this analysis reveals how power not only works coercively, but also productively creates knowledge, forms values, and regulates behavior. Field findings show that this process takes place in three interrelated phases: the formation of a way of thinking (*problematization*), the formation of values and norms (*normativization*), and the formation of actions/behaviors (*conduct formation*).

These three phases form a whole chain of arrangements. *Technical problematization* (phase 1) obscures the political roots of inequality, while positioning development as the only rational solution. *Normativization* (phase 2) ensures that the solution is accepted as a reasonable measure of progress, through the internalization of

value reinforced by sanctions mechanisms. Finally, *the formation of behavior* (phase 3) materializes these values and knowledge in the daily practices of the village community, who voluntarily or are forced to carry out the role of beneficiaries according to the design.

In the perspective *of governmentality*, this process shows that power works not solely by imposing the will from the outside, but through the formation of the subject from within regulating how the village thinks, judges, and acts. Meanwhile, from *the CDA's point of view*, the development discourse that appears to be technical and neutral is actually a construction full of interests, producing certain truths that support the structure of inequality and subordination.

Thus, the interconnectedness of methods, findings, and discussions in this study confirms that village development within the framework *of governmentality* is not a neutral or purely technical process, but part of a power strategy that shapes knowledge, norms, and behaviors to ensure the sustainability of the existing power relations pattern. This is what makes development both a technical and political instrument, which requires a critical reading to make room for a more emancipatory alternative.

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