

Good Leadership and Sustainability – Development Research and the realities at local and global levels

Paper submitted to *Sociologia Ruralis* for publication

Abstract: After an introductory section describing the framework of the LAGSUS research project and the field research methods used by the sociology component of this interdisciplinary project, the main section of the paper provides local images of good leadership and contrasts them with experiences of actual leadership. Similar characteristics of the image of a good leader and similarly disappointing experiences across the rather diverse concrete circumstances in the different research areas lead to the central hypothesis that “good leadership” encompasses similar attitudes and characteristics across cultures. Paramount among those are a sense of justice and an ability to listen, which give the followers of that leader a feeling of being respected and treated fairly. A “common sense” of justice thus becomes an important element of a model of good leadership which is valid and recognized both locally *and* internationally, as a few references to management and civil society literature show. The concluding sections present some reflections on the consequences of the centrality of a sense of justice for scientific research in the field of sustainable development: if the proposition that sustainability requires “good leadership” – which in turn encompasses the trust developed through recognition of a sense of justice and other characteristics – makes sense, and if at the same time there is a legitimate request for a more equitable distribution of access to resources, scientific research is in danger of losing its credibility if it does not address the question of ways to develop that kind of good leadership which is upheld in the majority of the *images* and yet found so infrequently in the actual experiences of the respondents.

People in the driver's seat of development? On the role of language in the tension between local and global discourses of development

Paper presented at the 20th international Conference of the VAD, *Knowledge and the Sciences in Africa*, July 24-27, 2006, Frankfurt am Main

Abstract: Seven conferences on "Language and Development" (sponsored by the British Council) have been held between 1993 and 2005. This paper provides a brief report on these conferences as a background for asking to what extent attention to language can address both the desire for material development expressed by a considerable number of people at the grassroots, and the World Bank's proclaimed goal of putting people in the "driver's seat" of development. It is suggested that the World Bank's image itself contains the basic tension between the aim of allowing people define their own goals and the continued international belief in the ability of "technology" to provide the means for achieving these goals: putting people in a "driver's seat" presupposes that there is a vehicle with a steering mechanism.

Discussions at the conferences on "Language and Development", as well as opinions of local people interviewed in the context of the research project LAGSUS raise the question to what extent the steering mechanism can be handled through the medium of local languages. Both in the international context and in the empirical material a striking feature is the prevalence of technical images of development on one side, and the insistence of (some) international experts, as well as of some local people, that the appropriate medium for handling "modern" technologies are "modern" languages, particularly English. The paper reports images of development and on differences in local perceptions of the role of the local language for

development between the Baluli in Uganda, the Herero in Namibia, and a group of minority languages in Celebes, Indonesia. While the images of "development" look similar, the perception of the local language as an appropriate vehicle seems to depend on the size of the language community: the strength of the Indonesian as a national language promoted through the education system, combined with the small size of the language communities, seems to diminish the role local people themselves accord to their own language for anything beyond everyday activities. What role is there, then, for "alternative visions" of development, based on grassroots conceptions developed in local languages?

Action Research - Justice in Action? Some reflections on power, ethics and sustainability

Paper presented at the World Congress Action Research *Participatory Research, Standards and Ethics*, Groningen, August 21-24, 2006 (paper published in Conference Reader on CD-Rom after peer review)

Abstract: Based on qualitative interviews in Indonesia, Namibia, and Uganda, the paper describes the role of power structures in either fostering or blocking processes of change leading to more sustainable livelihoods. Two effects stand out: 1) holders of positions of leadership control access to and use of resources on the basis of local rules; 2) the degree of adherence to locally accepted notions of justice influences not only the legitimacy of these leaders, but also the sustainability of resource use. Attempting to support "just" leaders through programs of "empowerment" with funds from industrialised (i.e. "rich") countries may, however, not be an option, because this might be viewed as yet another "Western" interference.

Good Leadership and Sustainability – evidence from three countries.

Paper presented at the annual LAGSUS conference, Tadulako University, Palu (Central Sulawesi, Indonesia), September 5-6, 2006 – to be published in Conference Proceedings

The paper presents a variety of local views on development, resource use, and leadership from Namibia, Indonesia, and Uganda. Despite the variety of ecological conditions and local languages, there seems to be a convergence in two respects: first, sustainable resource use entails balancing between individual interests and community interest which necessitates restrictions on individual interests; and second, the notions of "good leadership" presented in the three different countries all include elements of a respectful and fair treatment of the followers of "good leaders". The statements from the various countries obtained in the course of qualitative interviews in the local languages also contained dissatisfactions with actual leadership which point to a violation of the principles of good leadership proclaimed as valid by both leaders and followers.

On the basis of concrete examples as well as general reflection it is argued that both environmental sustainability as well as institutional sustainability require good leadership according – a leadership which respects the balance between individual and common or community interests. The danger is that not following principles of good leadership will affect institutional sustainability which, in turn, will lead to increased environmental degradation and thus endanger the sustainability of livelihoods in the long run.

Evaluating communicative and environmental sustainability - an approach to collaborative self-evaluation

Paper presented at the EASY ECO Conference *Improving the Quality of Sustainable Development Projects* (Saarbrücken and Bildungszentrum Kirkel, October 11-14, 2006 – published in conference proceedings)

Abstract: The paper describes a participatory evaluation approach which grew out of a research project investigating the role of local languages for the effectiveness of development communication. The approach takes care to include all local and non-local stakeholders in a collaborative assessment of both communicative and environmental sustainability. These terms and their relationship to the well-established approach of livelihoods sustainability are explained, followed by a description of concrete steps for a combination of individual and group methods, leading to a final group event for the collaborative assessment of the sustainability of local livelihoods. Attention is given to the role of conflicts stemming from social exclusion concerning access to natural resources and decision-making processes, and the role of openness for resolving such conflicts.

Trust as an experiential quality versus trust as a measurable quantity?

Paper presented at the workshop *Towards a Typology of Trust*, Cost Action 24, Working Group 3, University of Basel, Institut fuer Ethnologie, Dec. 8-9, 2006.

Abstract: Several attempts have been made to construct measures of trust, in an attempt to gauge its role as a component of “social capital” and, furthermore, its importance for the functioning of an economy. Its role in modern decentralised management, particularly with respect to the spread of networked companies, has also been discussed often. This paper attempts to link such quantitative measurements to the experiential quality of trust – what “we” experience if or when “we” trust. The experiential quality is approached by comparing arguments found in the (particularly philosophical) literature with personal experience. The conclusion from mapping personal experiences on existing suggestions to measure trust is that more attention to the experiential qualities of trust of the researcher him/herself as well as of those s/he researches will allow more precise “measures” of trust – measures which could also be useful for direct application by participants in situations where the presence of trust is deemed both necessary and uncertain.