Primitivity and Rural Development

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**Primitivity as a Sustainable Way of Life:**
The Spatial Transformation Accompanying the Urbanisation Movement and its Impact on the Primitive Way of Life of the Egyptian Rural community.

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Abstract: Egypt has witnessed the launch of great development movements as a result of a number of reasons. Their impact generates a rapid restructuring of economic, cultural, social and even political orientations. Changes in values, norms tastes, political structures, production system, and consumption patterns of the Egyptian community are well recognised. On the scale of the urban communities to some extent, they were able to bare such transformation while maintaining their cultural heritage. However, the spatial transformation occurring to the rural areas (Egyptian villages) especially those in direct contact to the central urbanisation regions have results in generating tremendous impacts. Such impacts has leads some of these villages to slack their distinct primitive way of life including there primitive urban form and architecture character to the urbanisation transformation. Such primitive way of life can be asserted to be the most sustainable way for such communities to survive sustain-ably within the context of their surrounding environment. Baring in mind that the rural areas form more than 60% of the inhabited areas in Egypt gives us an indicator to the importance of being able to maintain bio-diversity of these areas and thus preserving its primitive way of life. Accordingly, the paper is first to define the principles and features of the Egyptian rural community primitive way of life then will attempt to record the social, economical and cultural transformation of the rural Egyptian community. The methodology adopted will depend on the literature analysis to define the traditional feature of the primitive way of life than on conducting a field survey to record the contemporary transformation on two case studies one of which is very close to the urbanisation area as the main sources of impacts and the other is far off. An analytical case study based on the results of those two cases is to clarify such impacts. Further more, an analytical correlation study is to be conducted aiming to link such transformation to those of the primitive urban form and architecture character of the rural Egyptian community. Finally the paper is to discus the ability of the sustainability principles to positively contribute in the way of maintaining the bio-diversity of the primitive way of life for such communities.

**Introduction**

One of the great threats of the contemporary world is the rate of urbanisation transformation of the rural regions. The rural regions of the world form the ecological stability of the earth ecological system. Urban transition is propelled by profound social, economic and psychological factors. People feel the drive to emigrate to escape rural poverty, serious environmental problems and often the confinement of their rural communities. Moreover, there is the allure and the glare of the city which forms a strong pull to immigrate to cities, attracting them with the promise of a more diverse, secure and free life (BMBF, 2004). Although most of the city promises are often not fulfilled they still remain strong enough to entice people to desert their land and their families behind them and to start their journey searching for urbanisation.
Another serious problem of allowing such transformation to damage the rural regions of the world is the exaggerated stress on the city infrastructure and superstructure leading to a wider deterioration to the quality of life offered by these cities to their dwellers. If we know that according to senesces the world rural regions is to accommodate around 53% percent worldwide at present. Increasing in Africa to reach 63% at present to an expected 47% in the year 2030, while in Islamic countries it is expected to reach only 35% by the year 2020 (BMBF, 2004). That means that in developing countries under the current circumstances, it is expected the rural regions is to expel/lose 50% of its population while the world is expected to add around 3 billion people to the existing 6 billion meaning that cities will have to accommodate around 80% of the world inhabitants, not only that but it is expected that 80% of the increase will be in developing countries (BMBF, 2004).

The rural exodus of farmers leads successively to the weakening of social structures in rural regions, to the fading of traditional environmental knowledge, to unclear tenure and to the abandonment of traditional soil cultivation methods, which are usually adapted to the ecological features crucial for the stability of the Earth ecological system. Leading to a serious problem associated with the economic stability of most of the developing countries being economically based on the agricultural sector. Awaiting the globalisation era where these countries will have to compete with developed countries in a free world market, any expected industrial competition is expected to favour the developed world. Accordingly, the only chance for these worlds to survive can be seen as their abilities to develop their agricultural economic sector, meaning to maintain the diversity of their rural regions, improving the quality of life, reducing poverty, empowering farming activities, reviving the rural economics, and having the ability to deal with the world global changes.

To conclude, one of the most challenges awaiting the developing countries would be the massive need to develop its rural regions in a way that could accommodate the world global changes while being able to sustain its diversity and economic stability, i.e. the need to promote sustainable rural development.

Rural Development and Challenges
To initiate a development we need to be able to define its ‘pros’ and ‘coins’. In other words we need to be able to define existing and future challenges, resources and advantages. We need to know where we stand now and why; where do we want to be and when?

Among the development challenges of the rural regions beside the former defined are the world global changes. The term ‘global change’ was coined to comprise a multitude of individual phenomena in nature and in human communities (BMBF, 2004). Examples of global changes taking place in nature include global climate change and the greenhouse effect, the scarcity and pollution of drinking water, the loss of fertile soils, and the decline in the diversity of animal and plants species. These changes also extend to include changes of epochal dimensions such as: loss of cultural heritage and sense of culture pride, the interweaving of the economic regions, and diminishing of locality.

People both trigger and are affected by global changes. They initiate processes of global change in order to improve their situation and will be confronted with the economic, social and ecological impact of these transformation with which they must cope. Global changes should inevitably be judged as bad or catastrophic. Precautions are important changes can happen very quickly and could have a lasting and
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irreversible effect. Precautions can be gauged with the help of the principles of sustainable development. For example we can educate the people about how to deal with expected changes, through initiation of a number of interpretation projects aiming to educate the citizen of a specific rural region. Also, development and change are inevitable, the type, location and impacts can be substantially directed to produce outcomes that would benefits: residents, business people, farmers and other affected persons rather than eroding the community social character, quality of life and natural resources (Kline, 2000).

Disadvantages of Rural Communities

As a result of a number of profound studies that aims to define the disadvantage of rural firms and workers a number of disadvantages were defined such as: the location of urban societies and their impacts; the geographical dispersion of rural businesses and residents; poor transport facilities; the small size of many rural firms and the relatively high proportion of the self-employed in rural areas; difficulties in gaining employment for local, rather that in-migrant, people resulting largely from the decline in agriculture, under paid wages compared with other relative jobs, and attendant problems of poverty and social exclusion; and the complete ignorance of the government of the supplying the fundamental needs for these communities (after Bennett and Errington, 1995 and Owen, 1996). The rural challenge is thus wide ranging and in the added context of a divided society it also requires initiatives to promote mutual respect between contesting political and cultural traditions. Moseley (2000), summarise the challenges of rural development as follows:

- Poor image of rural society;
- Fatalism and lack of entrepreneurialism
- Insufficient job creation;
- Poor to inappropriate vocational training;
- Low population densities and a lack of economics scale;
- Loss of established agricultural/food markets;
- Responding to negative environmental protectionism;
- Identifying appropriate technologies

(\textit{Moseley, 2000, p.98})

All these have leads to what we are facing nowadays of ‘rural fragility’. The term is to refer to an area that suffers a critical situation and is in massive need to adapt or renew its economy, to improve its infrastructure, and to be able to integrate itself in the general process of development. If such fragility is not to be corrected in the right time it will leads to increasing marginalisation and abandonment follows to an extent which is unsustainable and leads to a crisis situation.

Advantages of Rural Communities

Rural communities form the corner stone for the stability of the Earth ecological system. In the heart of every one of us it means peace, safety and traditions. To maintain such diversity of our region areas is a matter moral obligation, not to mention it crucial important (profoundly expressed in the former part of the paper) to the survival of the human beings with especial reference to developing countries. ‘Rural’ to most of us means simplicity being with nature in direct contact and even beauty. It is the places all around the world were you can find peace, escaping the heavy pollution of the industrialised world and the chaos of the technological information ear. Moseley’s (1996) charted the rural community resources to comprise:

1) natural environment: land, forest, water, hills, fauna and flora;
2) cultural heritage: landscape, historic monuments; local architecture, local products, local culture, local brands and trademarks;
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3) infrastructure: communication nodes, proximity to urban centres, serviced industrial land, housing available for rent, low priced land and buildings;
4) people: innovativeness, leadership (in business, voluntary sector, etc.), natives of the region in position of responsibility, people with specific qualifications;
5) organisations: machinery for inter-communal co-operation, strong voluntary bodies, strong collective structure, subsidiaries of major companies, presence of regional labels;
6) financial resources: business capacity for investment, domestic saving, fiscal resource of the communes, local tax base.

(Moseley, 1996, p.25-27)

Accordingly, rural communities carries a lot of chances to promote a sustainable development that those compared to urban communities of developing world, where the urban sprawl takes hold, a development that, as in industrialised countries, can rarely be considered to be sustainable. However, the crisis lies in that the fragility of the rural communities cannot stand to those impacts of the urbanisation transformation that had started to lay its impact on the rural communities of the developing world, urging the immediate inevitable interference aiming to be able to apply sustainable rural development one that can overcome the current disadvantages accompanying the global changes while maintaining the resources of the rural communities for the sake of the current as well as the future generations.

Rural Development

Rural development is a multi-dimension process that seeks to integrate sustainable manner economic, socio-cultural and environmental objectives to satisfy the needs of current and future generations. In its broad notion it encompasses all important issues pertinent to individual and collective vitality of rural people and places. It needs an organised and articulated effort of a community to empower itself within its existent contexts and conditions. To conclude rural development have to offer a sustained and sustainable process of cultural, social and economic change designed to maintain and enhance the local preference of the rural communities trends and way of life for the seeks of the current as well as the future generations (Owen, 1996; and Moseley, 2000). Baring the fact that, in some ways, rural settlements are more sustainable than urban areas in terms of reliance on local sources of energy, low rates of natural resources consumptions, self sufficient food and natural materials provider, and coherent local and social integration.

To achieve these sustainability benefits we would, however, require a more proactive approach to the development of settlements than is manifested in the current development plans and policies. The social viability of the conserved rural communities should be regarded as a primary objective of rural planning and any contemporary or future debates about the sustainability and development of the rural communities.

Based on the former analysis concerning the sustainable development of the rural communities we could argue that most Egyptian Rural Communities is in the critical situation of high rural fragility. Such situation has driven the attention of the government to initiate a number of development projects aiming to guide these regions in a sustainable manner away from the edge of the crises. If we take development as a mean to sustain or to reach as sustainable process of economic, social, cultural and environmental change designed to enhance the long term well-being of the whole community (Moseley, 2000) then sustainability should be promoted. Sustainability should be concerned with: reviving growth; changing quality of life; quality of growth to make it less material and energy intensive and more
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equitable in its impacts; meeting essential needs for jobs, food, energy, water and sanitation; ensuring sustainable level of population; conserving and enhancing resources; reorienting technology and managing risks; and merging environmental and economic consideration in decision taking (Owen, 1996, p. 41). There is a massive need to be able to restore and sustain the social viability of the Egyptian Rural communities form the ever-growing negative impacts of the former defined global changes and urbanisations impacts.

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Elements of the Primitive Egyptian Rural Communities
Among the 69 million Egyptian inhabitants (Ministry of Internal Development (MID), 2004) there are 40 million inhabitants, around 58% of the Egyptian inhabitants, living in rural areas and forming the Rural Egyptian Communities. Leaving us with 4623 recorded Egyptian Villages against only 213 urban cities. Giving clear indicator for the important of the Egyptian rural areas for Egypt. Studies that aim to define the primitive way of life, culture heritage, norms and to define the elements of primitive rural architecture and urban fabric are enormous (figure, 1). However, it’s beyond the scope of this paper to further investigate such results, the study needs only to report on these features in order to be able to conduct the correlation analytical study between the primitive and contemporary features of the Egyptian Rural Communities, with the real contribution aimed to be supplied by this paper.

Rural Economics
On the economical dimension the main economic sector used to be the agricultural sector. Encompassing not less that 98% of the labour force. The primitive economy of the rural areas was tied to the way of life and the family organisation system. Where we can find that the distribution of the job among the family members for the reason of living and supporting the family needs. This system proving its efficiency was best portrayed as family’s economy and not agriculture economy. The core of the family economy system was the house as a productive economic unit, providing all the needs of the family and having surplus to be exported to the urban areas. The main target of the system was to support the ecological primitive way of life and not to provide economic profits, although it did manage to support the required economic profit.

Rural Social Life
The most important issues describing the primitive Egyptian rural communities were the formulation of a closed society. The reactions towards the urban areas were completely static or within the minor limits, forming what can be described as an
inner oriented community. These inner oriented communities have leads to coherent social relations within the community. The first social cell was the family bound. Then followed by a strong and adherent sense of: co-operation, collaboration, religious believes, homogeneous society, and a robust sense of belonging to the place and the community. In other words, all the elements and components of a successful public participation system, around which the contemporary realm of sustainability is going around urging its strengthen and arguing its ability to promote sustainability, was achieved and promoted a part of the primitive rural communities way of life. The importance of education was diminished being so expensive that rarely citizens of the rural community can support any of their family members to reach the university level.

Rural Environment
Most of the study noticed the rural environment as one of the resources of the rural community, being clear, untouched, not polluting and baring a lot of hopes for a better future. The primate way of life of the Egyptian Rural Communities has resulted in an ecological environmental approach, one that can be argued to have the ability to satisfy the rural communities’ needs, without or with minimum negative impacts on the community resources. Starting from the house building materials, design, construction, and forms presenting a complete example for elements of primitive architectures that did accumulated through eras of thoughts, thinking and experience to form one of the most ecological stable internal environment, depending on the natural resources with minimum depletion of these resource. They never used chemicals in the cultivation of their lands. They did care about the well-being of the land and the environment since they means life for these communities and not a job opportunity.

Primitivity as a way of life
The former analysis of the rural Egyptian communities have proved that, Egypt holding a history of more than 6000 years as one of the world fist established rural communities has off course being able to establish its own primitive way of life. The prolonged accumulation of civilisation has ended with a unique cultural heritage comprising elements of: landscape, historic monuments, local architecture, local products, local culture, local brands and trademarks. This primitive way of life can be argued to have reached the boundaries of stability among the 3 dimensions of the development process. With the usual ups and downs leading to some local internal instability, however, since the instability was locally it usually does not last so long until the stability is to be sustained.

Figure 2, presents us with a descriptive analysis of the primitivity zone regarded as community stability zone, and the disturbance ups and downs zones. Describing the current problems associated with each dimension of the development process. If the problems is to concern the economic dimensions that means poverty
and more marginal and small economic business; when the deficiencies are on the social dimension it would means high culture shock, loss in elements of locality and high immigration rate; and if the problems are on the environmental dimension it would means to the fading of traditional environmental knowledge, to unclear tenure and to the abandonment of traditional soil cultivation methods.

The Spatial Transformation of the Egyptian Rural Community
According, to the former identified world global changes and rural communities impacts, the preceding primitivity zone presented in figure, 2 has witnessed a lot of impacts and changes. The aim of this part of the paper will be: first to identify these changes; then to report quantitatively by means of a field survey on the degree of impacts on the Egyptian Rural Communities (the survey is to cover two case studies one very close to Giza city as a main source of urbanisation and the other is on the boundary of the city region).

Contemporary Changes of the Egyptian Rural Communities
The best way to represent these changes would be through charting them under the 3 main dimensions of development (figure, 3) as follows:

![Figure 3, Contemporary Changes of the Egyptian Rural Communities](source: researcher)

Transformation of the Economic Dimension

- Diminishing of the Agricultural sector from being the basic economic sector to be a marginal sector. Ending by that the community stability based on the theory of the family economics.
- The robust growth for the population of the rural areas accompanied with the extension of the building areas on the cultivation land has leads to an explicit decrease in the area of the cultivated land.
- The division of the lands property, to comprise very small properties that cannot offer the required economic stability for the family.
- Striving of the families for the highest economic value has lead to change of cultivated crops from ones that would satisfy their needs to the ones that would achieve maximum revenues.
- The end of the rural house as a productive unit, to be a consumption unit.
- The use of environmental incompatible building materials resulting on high rate of energy consumption, and high depletion rates of natural resources.
- The unemployment rate within the rural community has reached 15% of the total active labour force, which means the need to provide 2.8 million job opportunities within the rural communities.

(after: Al-Adawy, 1997)

Transformation of the Social Dimension

- The end of the enclosed inner oriented community to be substituted with the outer oriented, open, exposed community. In addition to diminishing the role of the
family economic stability to be changed only to a house accommodated family with very weak family bonds, in most cases.

- The repulsion of the rural environment/community has leads most of the trained farmers to, immigrate either to urban areas or outside the country especially to the Gulf area, seeking higher wages and economic revenues. Such immigration trend has negatively effected the social construction of the family.
- The fact of the family being a social and economic cell has diminished.
- The community sense of belonging has diminished in a way that may threaten any attempt to promote sustainable rural developments.

(after: Al-bourg, 2003; and Al-Adawy, 1997)

Transformation of the Environmental Dimension

- The providing with the rural areas with drinking water, without the availability of any sewage system, resulted in the most negative impact on rural areas. The excessive uncontrolled used of water without the providence of sewage system has ended with the fact of polluting the underground basins, and that most of the rural villages are now swimming on seas of polluted water.
- The immigration of the trained farmers and the inattention to the soil has lead to the soil erosion of the cultivated land. Instead of dealing with the problem, striving for quick income, the farmers starts the use of the chemicals, causing enormous damage to the natural environment, soil, cultivated crops, and even human-health.
- Some of the rural citizens unaware of the amount of damage they are causing to the environment and to their own health drain their sewage wells into water canals and even throw the litter and animals leftovers in these canals.
- The utilisation of incompatible environmental building materials, thus the inability to provide the required inner comfort zone, leading to the excessive depending on the electronic equipments to satisfy their needs.
- The excessive burning for the leftovers of the cultivation crops has leads to the presence of the black cloud phenomena which most of the Delta Region and Cairo Region inhabitant suffer from severely by the end of the summer season

(after: Al-bourg, 2003)

Quantitative analysis for spatial transformation of the Egyptian Rural Community

Based on the preceding analysis the aim of this study would be to report quantitatively on the degree of impact of the urbanisation areas as the main nodes of global changes on the features of the Egyptian Rural Community,
as well as measuring the degree of changes to the primitive features of the Egyptian Rural Community. A number of precautions were considered to minimise any bias and to maximise the validity and reliability of the case studies finding as much as possible, especially in the selection of the case studies and in the sampling strategy.

**Selection of the Case Studies:** The selected case studies were selected in the same regions in order to neutralise as much as possible any cultural, economic or social factors and to be able to measure the real spatial transformation impacts as a factor of the distance between the case study and the source of urbanisation. The most urbanised area in Egypt is the Great Cairo Region comprising nearly all sources of global impacts and representing the most sprawl of urbanisation within the country. The two selected case studies were chosen (figure, 4) one close to main urbanisation core (Cairo & Giza Cities), only 20 Km away. The second is far as possible about located on the region boundary around 50 Km away.

**Sampling Strategy:** The case studies were found to comprise different urban forms being developed on various development stages, where mainly in the core of the village there is the most primate urban forms and the newly forms/impacts on the borders of the villages. Accordingly the sampling strategies aimed to target the various communities within the villages represented by the various urban forms, aiming to maximise the representatively of the sample to the sampling community and thus achieving the most valid and reliable results.

**Case Studies Findings**
Among the findings of the case studies were the following:

**On the Economic Dimension**
The change in the community economic sectors is well recognised (figure, 5), where the agriculture sector was found to form only (3-12)% of the community economics. Highest scored ratio was that of the employers sector, giving clear evidence of the transformation that occurred to the economic basis of the community. On the scale of the house evidence are clear regarding the transformation of the house from an economical production unit

![Figure 5, Findings of the Economic Dimension](source: researcher based on survey analysis)
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to a low income consumption unit. Figure 5, reports on the transformation that took place to the components of the house where traditional elements were substituted by the new modern (energy consumption/environmental polluting) components. On the scale of the houses 100% of the new houses are built from environmentally incompatible building materials. Add to that the changes in the structure of the houses (figure, 5) where only the one floor houses are found to form only 18% of the case studies houses. However, it was found also that the family bond still exists where most of the houses were found to be owned and inhabited by only one extended family.

On the Social Dimensions
The major impacts or transformation that occurred on the social dimension are the end of the family economic and the production family theories and the decline to the agricultural and farming activities (figures, 5). Also figure 6, recorded one of the greatest impacts of urbanisation on the social Egyptian Rural Communities where in case study1, it was found that due to the natural beauty of the village, proximity to urbanisation nodes (Cairo and Giza cities) and the ambience of the Nile river. The village attracts the elite and high income peoples from the city to come and live in the village and thus forming highly social segregation or inhomogeneous among the rural community of the village. The result was a number of power groups (figure, 6) that have impacts on the decision making and less satisfaction and sense of belonging among the community of the case study (1). Case study (2) did not recorded any impacts on the social classification and the homogeneously of the community. Also the study recorded very high expelling and pulling immigration effects as over 90% of the respondents stated in both case studies. Investigating the reason resulted that the pulling effect comes from the proximity of the case studies to the urban nodes thus it acts as a sheep houses providing source for emigrates from rural regions. As for the high expelling rate, was due to the search for better living conditions either in the cities or even out of the country in other Arab countries.

On the environmental Dimension

Figure 3, Contemporary Environmental Impacts
Source: researcher

It was found that all or most of the case studies houses were supplied with water sources. However, there isn’t any sewage systems provided. Also, there is no clean
drinking water available. The providence of water without any disposal or collecting system available has resulted in high pollution rates to the under ground water and even to the surrounding environment (figure, 7) such that both case studies can be asserted to be floated over sewage lakes. The garbage and litter problem where there isn’t any environmentally friendly system to collect and dispose them. However, most of the garbage and leftovers are either thrown into any empty lands within the case studies or even into the agricultural canals (figure, 7).

Concluding Findings
Through figures 2 to 7, the transformation to the Egyptian Rural Communities due to identified global changes and the urbanisation process were well recognised. Not only that but also the results gives clear evidence that the proximity to the urban nodes is a well effecting factor in the spatial transformation process. Where case study (1) recorded a great degree of impacts compared to that recorded by case study (2).

However, a significant finding of the case studies was that recorded when the respondents were asked to list the development priorities (figure, 8) that they consider most urgent for the development process of their villages. They rated the providence of the sewage system and pure drinking water supplies as the two highest priorities requests. Although the rational acceptance of the listed priorities, what was not rational/odd what the total neglect of the problem associated with the garbage and leftovers (figure, 8). Such unexpected results urged the investigation for the reason behind. The results were that the listing of the sewage and the drinking water was of high priority because they do impose economic stresses on the already exhausted (below poverty line) family expenditures, through the need to buy drinking and to rent disposal cars to...
empty the sewage tanks. However, the garbage problem being as serious or even more serious encompassing health and environmental impacts was neglected. This proves that the community needs to be educated about the environment and the risk of destroying the environment for their own well being and as well as for the future generation.

Also an expected result was that of the high dependency (figure, 9) of the rural community on the urban nodes, turning all the communities into marginal communities where most of their inhabitants have to commute to the urban nodes for working and providing their needs.

Conclusions

- The findings of the case studies and the theoretical analytical analysis gives clear evidence regarding the spatial transformation that occurred to the Egyptian rural Communities as the result of the urbanisation process and the global changes. Such changes (figure, 10) have led to a great deal of impacts driving the community away from its stability regional the asserted been achieved by the primitivity of the rural community (as a way of life). Figure, 10 illustrates the current contemporary impacts of the Rural Egyptian and presents a proposed framework for regaining the stability of the Egyptian Rural communities on two stages.
  - The first phase: vital action plan (short term action plan), aiming to release the pressure on the natural resources, decrease the depletion rate and conserve elements of culture heritage or primitivity. Global changes should not be regarded as catastrophic. If we could have the ability to anticipate such changes and initiate an early education/interpretation campaign aiming to educate the people about how to deal with expected changes, impacts could be minimised and benefits could be maximised and filtered through to benefit the local communities.
  - The Second phase: is to compromise an innovative proactive action oriented plan (Long term plans). Through which we can apply and promote ideas for community-led development programs; sustainable management; i.e. promoting sustainable rural development that emanates from the principles of the primitive Egyptian rural community.

- Development and change are inevitable, the type, location and impacts can be substantially directed to produce outcomes that would benefits: residents, business
people, farmers and other affected persons rather than eroding the community 
social character, quality of life and natural resources. In doing so the role of 
sustainable development is emphasised. Having the ability to build on the 
principles and features of primitivity, preserving the cultural heritage and 
conserving the locality of the rural community, while providing real applicable 
solution for the current and anticipated future problems, is the challenge of 
sustainable rural development.

- Public participation is 
among the high priorities 
agendas of the world for 
their argued abilities to 
promote sustainable 
development. Although 
the case studies finding 
show (figure, 11) a very 
high welcoming of the 
respondent to be involved 
in any rejuvenation or 
development program 
that would aims to 
improve the quality of 
their lives. The result 
regarding the tendency to 
participate with money 
places a large question mark about the reality of public participation within the 
developing constraints in developing countries.

References


