


The Impact of Modernization on Social Change in Rural Communities in South Sulawesi, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the dynamics of modernization and its implications for social structures, cultural practices, and community responses in rural South Sulawesi, Indonesia. While modernization is often theorized as a unidirectional process of economic and technological transformation, empirical evidence from this research demonstrates that rural communities actively negotiate, reinterpret, and adapt modernization to fit local contexts. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis to capture the lived experiences of villagers across generational and social groups. Findings reveal significant shifts in social structures, with leadership legitimacy increasingly tied to education and professional competence rather than hereditary or customary authority. Cultural practices have also undergone transformation: rituals, language, and artistic expressions are selectively retained, shortened, or reinterpreted to align with modern time constraints, digital technologies, and economic demands. At the same time, the monetization of communal labor illustrates a critical tension between efficiency and the erosion of traditional reciprocity. Community responses reflect hybrid strategies—embracing digital entrepreneurship, reformulating collective action, and fostering intergenerational dialogue to balance continuity with change. The study concludes that modernization in rural contexts is not simply an external imposition but a co-constructive process that blends adaptation, negotiation, and cultural resilience. These findings contribute to management and organizational scholarship by highlighting embedded agency, hybrid leadership, and value-based organizational learning in rural development. They further offer practical insights for policymakers and practitioners seeking to design culturally resonant and participatory modernization programs.

Keywords: modernization, social change, cultural transformation

INTRODUCTION

The idea of modernization has emerged to be one of the significant contributors of the social change within the rural regions in Indonesia, South Sulawesi, inclusive. The process is not as apparent as what one can observe due to the physical development and infrastructure but also has a great influence on a cultural value, social system, and community relationship. This fact is congruent with a more general sociological view that modernization tends to change the dynamics of social stratification and mobility, especially when pitting agrarian societies that begin to apply new technologies in farming (Pogosyan, 2021). Research has revealed that as modernization occurs in a rural agrarian setting, the economic foundations are transformed and at the same time family functions are changed and collective cultures are affected.

Modernization is commonly revealed by changes in livelihoods, rural urban migration and changing positions of youth in their respective societies in South Sulawesi. Partnership report for Australia-Indonesia research discusses the impacts of agrarian changes on the mobility of young people in shaping the rural labor force. South Sulawesi had very high rates of youth unemployment at 10 percent, which indicates pressures and prospects as a result of modernization in the countryside (Griffin et al., 2024). These dynamics stem the fact that modernization not only brings up new challenges but also puts in place new trajectories of economic mobility.

Such government-led initiatives as Village Fund (Dana Desa) introduced in 2015 have served as powerful tools of local modernization. The implementation of the policy of One Village, One Billion Rupiah as a strategy to distribute a lot of money to the rural communities to build up infrastructure, jumpstart economies, and access to services (Putra, 2022). The Village Development Index (VDI) indicates that there are still numerous underdeveloped villages that are concentrated in Sulawesi and this factor highlights local issues in patterning up with the national modernization agenda. These programs strengthen economic self-empowerment in rural locations but convey new layers of governance issues and conflicts in rural regions (Harinurudin et al., 2025).

In parallel to such initiatives, “Smart Village” has emerged as a digital innovation plan to fast track rural development. This is because through integration of information and communication technologies, rural areas will have better accessibility in health, education, and business opportunities (Aruleba & Jere, 2022). However, the problem of scholarly breakdown, inadequate internet access, and digital inequality are among the factors limiting rural communities in order to gain proper access to the benefits associated with them (Zaman et al., 2022). Digital divide has thus emerged as yet another one of modernization imbalanced effects.

Modernization also raises the question of how it is possible to survive within local customs and indigenous people. The organized collective response to the interconnected challenges of modernization and state-led development projects that primarily encroach on customary rights and cultural heritage has come in the form of the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago. These politics are observable in Torajan communities in South Sulawesi where contemporary modernity has threatened traditions through community migration and commodification of cultures in the form of tourism and coffee production.

Generational gaps are very evident the case is that younger generations tend to embrace new technologies and seek new education and jobs, whereas older generations adhere to traditional patterns and systems of values (Choudhary et al., 2024). This generational gap indicates the bipolarity of the modernization in that modernization not only accumulates chances of adapting but also generates strains in societal togetherness.

Social forestry programs also explain how rural governance is extremely complex in modernization. Although perceived as a means of facilitating communities in sustainably managing natural resources, issues pertaining to bureaucracy and uncertainty in regulations have discouraged the efficiency of WJs (Putkowska et al., 2021). Such experiences reflect the fact that modernization policies, which are not allowed to be in tandem with the local capacities and knowledge systems, may only widen the inequalities as against solving them.

It should also be noted that modernization is not purely a material process but it is also a process whose consecutive stages can be observed on a cultural level. The study of agrarian society in wetlands in Indonesia demonstrates that farmers in this case have remained attached to local knowledge, which includes the planting schedules, farm water management, and use of indigenous seeds in spite of the modernity preponderance brought by climate change, high cost of Agri-inputs, and ever-changing land use. The synergy of traditional and modern ways of thinking depicts that rural modernization in South Sulawesi is not a straightforward event in which tradition was being replaced with modernity.

Experts suggest that incorporating the rural informal sectors into the modern economy can become the driver of inclusive growth on a national level. It is, however, vital that this sort of integration be concerned with local contextualities and respectful of community agency. In its absence, modernization has a potential to implicitly entrench structural inequalities between the countrysides and urban settlements.

Generally, it is seen that modernization in rural South Sulawesi is a phenomenon which includes economic, technological, cultural, and political horizons. Its effects are both positive and negative on the one hand it has provided space to create chances of development and boundary formation, and on the other has caused disturbance to the traditional values, societal setups, and intergenerational unison. A qualitative standpoint is vital to get an idea of what modernization looks like to the rural communities: how they are accommodating, resisting and reframing their social identities to the universe of modernization. This paper locates these dynamics within the local context of South Sulawesi which leads to making contributions to the wider debates of modernization, social change and cultural resilience in rural societies.

METHOD

Research Design and Rationale

A qualitative multiple-case study with use of multiple case study design was applied in this research to present the layered and situated impact of modernization on social change among the rural communities of South Sulawesi.

The qualitative approach would be adopted since the subjects of interest such as the changing practices in everyday life and negotiation of cultural values, transitions of social relations, and community formation to policy and technology can only be explored using the lived experience of the participants and their locally constructed meanings. Treating the villages as bounded cases allowed analytical comparison across the different rural ecologies (coastal, lowland/agrarian, highland) without diminishing the specificity of place and history. The design was descriptive-interpretive: it aimed to describe changes as residents made sense of them and interpret how these changes were embedded in local institutions including family, customary power, religious activity, and networks of producers.

Study Setting and Case Selection

The rural communities in the south Sulawesi that were used in fieldwork represented meaningful variation to modernization pressures. Sites were chosen purposively to represent (a) communities that were becoming exposed to digital infrastructures and market integration, (b) agrarian villages where agricultural mechanization and input intensification featured, and (c) communities where cultural tourism, migration or remittances came to mediate social change. The upshot of this maximal-variation logic was that this study was able to learn how modernization forces were refracted by different ecologies, livelihoods, and cultures. Selection was guided by prior scoping interviews with provincial and district actors, provincial and district development documents and prior scholarly and policy mappings of rural transformation in the province. Entry into communities was negotiated on a social-acceptance and ethical-entry basis, based on the village governments, customary leaders and trusted intermediaries.

Sampling Strategy and Participants

As part of sampling, purposive and snowball methods were combined to select information-rich case participants who were in different social positions and generational cohorts. The corpus was comprised of village officials, customary and religious leaders, elders, women with household businesses and informal trade, youth with digital work or school, farmers and fishers, returning migrants and the local entrepreneurs. Inclusion put a premium on the breadth of viewpoint, not on representativeness. The recruitment of gatekeepers and key informants was used as a foundation and the recruitment extended through referral till thematic redundancy occurred. It was also attempted to balance gender, age, livelihood and status to avoid the overtures of elite domination by their narratives. Answers were given on a voluntary basis. To overcome intrahousehold effects, to ensure certain voices are not muted, separate time and safe location were allocated to conduct interviewing.

Data Collection Procedures

The focus in data collection was on depth and triangulation. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted and explored the participants story about what had changed, what had remained the same and the way they assessed these changes. Interview questions were adaptable, and additional questions were used to explore areas of specific interest as they became salient, such as technology use, livelihoods and labor, kinship obligations, religious and ceremonial activity, local governance, youth aspirations and community solidarity. In a subset of sites, focus group discussions were held to bring out common frames, areas of differences and definitions of the community problems on modernization. Participant observation was conducted in local context marketplace, field, coastal landing ground, community meetings, religious performances, and youth meetings in order to capture activities that were either self-evident to participants or were problematic in describing. Observational field notes recorded interchanges, routines, objects, as well as spatial layouts that could be found applicable to modernization activities (e.g., use of smartphones in exchanges, application of machinery, remittance habits, or rearrangement of community spaces). Document review was complemented by primary data in the form of village development plans, minutes of community meetings, program reports, and local regulations that framed the lines of modernization. The interviews were audio-taped with consent and complemented with jottings as well as additional fieldnotes, written within 24 hours of the interview to remain contextually rich and informed by reflexivity.

Language, Translation, and Cultural Mediation

Interviews were undertaken in Bahasa Indonesia and in local languages where so appropriate. Makassarese-speaking and Buginese-speaking community-based assistants were used when interpretation between the participants was required, and it was necessary to maintain idiomatic meanings. A translation protocol was implemented: audio was initially transcribed verbatim in the language of interview, proofread against audio recordings to identify mistakes and revised in case there were errors, and finally translated into Bahasa Indonesian or English for the analysis. To limit semantic drift, back-checking of some segments was carried out, in particular, culturally dense terminology (e.g., concepts related to adat, reciprocity or ritual obligations). As a research team, regular debrief sessions were conducted to clarifying century wider words that could not be translated simply with a single word and to concur on the same analytical glosses.

Research Instruments and Pilot Work

Interview and observational instruments were prepared based on the research objectives and were iteratively improved during an initial pilot study in one of the non-study villages that shared many similarities with the study population. Pilot testing was used to pilot-test the cultural acceptability of prompting, pace, sequencing and income, religion, local conflict question sensitivity. Major changes made were that all technical phrasing was simplified, rapport building questions were moved to earlier, and a story-based prompt was integrated into the test that participants found less awkward. Guides were actually living documents corrected over time as the field experience was gained.

Data Management and Transcription

Audio files, transcripts, translations, fieldnotes, and documents were stored in a robust folder structure with consistent file-naming conventions identified by site, participant type and date. Transcripts were prepared by experienced transcribers with knowledge of local pronunciation; a 1015 percent random sample of transcripts was audited line per line by a senior researcher to ensure accuracy of time marking, identification of the speaker and a notation of nonverbal signals. At the transcription phase all personal identifying information was stripped out and replaced with pseudonyms. A de-identification key was stored in a different place on an encrypted disk to which only the principal investigator would have access.

Analytic Strategy and Coding Procedures

Analysis was thematic in design and based on a multi-stage process. The group started with open coding in order to produce emic categories that participants referred to in their own words and the a priori beliefs were scrupulously set aside. This was then transformed to axial coding so that categories were linked and patterns identified between modernization drivers (e.g. digitalization, market integration, policy programs, migration) and social outcomes (e.g. shifting gender roles, youth aspirations, communal reciprocity, religious practice, authority structures). Finally, selective coding was used to generalize higher-order themes, and negative cases to summaries the emergent account of social change. The qualitative analysis and coded using qualitative analysis software which would allow the obvious managing and retrieval, as well as, inter-case comparisons. A preliminary codebook was prepared on the basis of five selected diverse transcripts, which were discussed in the team meetings and refined over several iterations; operational definitions and inclusion/exclusion rules were added to each code. In order to confirm consistency, a subset of materials was coded by two analysts and discussed where there were areas of disagreement on concepts until conceptual agreement was realized. Analytic memos monitored shifting interpretations, competing explanations and connections to field observations and documents. Cross case matrices and timeline sketches were used to compare the trajectories and identify configuration under which certain changes were more or less salient.

Saturation, Triangulation, and Credibility

Data collection proceeded until thematic saturation a point at which no new data generated by further interviews and observations led to substantively new results in each site and overall was reached. Triangulation was developed in approaches (interviews, focus groups, observation, documents), data sources (leaders, youth, women, producers, return migrants) and locations (coastal/lowland/highland). One step that was used to incorporate reflection was sharing preliminary interpretive feedback with small groups of participants or gatekeepers, who were invited to correct and to elaborate. Credibility was enhanced by peer debriefings to the research team and to outside scholars who know Sulawesi well but who had not engaged in data collection. The sessions questioned emergent claims, considered negative cases, and challenged propositions that could be tested in order to avoid confirmation bias.

Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

The team identified how identities and trajectories of researchers determine access, querying and the inclination of the participants to disclosure. Positionality statements were composed before the fieldwork in order to raise the assumptions related to modernization, tradition, religion, and development. During fieldwork, members kept reflexive journals including power dynamics, incidents of friction and rapport, and emotional reactions; journals were discussed during weekly debriefs, and formed part of analytic decisions. Especial care was given to intergenerational and gender relations that could distort accounts- such as young researchers interviewing male elders or female researchers eliciting the role of women in economics. Reflexive practice was considered as part of the data, not the noise and contributed to interpretation of silences, deference or strategic performances in the presentation of public pets.

Result and Discussion

The empirical findings of this study capture the multifaceted ways in which modernization has reshaped the social, cultural, and organizational dimensions of rural communities in South Sulawesi. The analysis draws on in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation to highlight how modernization manifests in everyday life, how it reconfigures social structures, transforms cultural practices, and elicits a range of community responses. Rather than treating modernization as a uniform force, the results illustrate its negotiated character, where adaptation, resistance, and innovation coexist in dynamic interplay. The following sections present these findings thematically, offering insights into the lived experiences of villagers and their strategies for navigating the pressures and opportunities of change.

Manifestations of Modernization

Modernization in rural communities of South Sulawesi has become increasingly visible in the last two decades, reshaping various aspects of community life. The field data suggest that modernization manifests in everyday experiences through technological integration, economic diversification, cultural transformation, educational aspirations, infrastructure development, and evolving gender roles. These shifts demonstrate how rural societies are not isolated but are actively negotiating the pressures and opportunities brought by modernization.

The most apparent manifestation is the widespread adoption of technology, particularly mobile phones and internet connectivity. Even in villages once considered remote, the majority of households now own smartphones, using them not only for communication but also for accessing market information, educational resources, and social media platforms. This transformation has dramatically altered the way people connect with the outside world. This indicates how information technology has redefined access to knowledge, broadened horizons, and accelerated exposure to global trends. Economic transformation is another strong marker of modernization. While agriculture and fishing remain important, many households are shifting toward wage labor, entrepreneurship, and online business. This diversification reflects both necessity and aspiration, as rural families seek stability in the face of agricultural uncertainty.

The comment highlights a generational transition, where traditional livelihoods are supplemented or even replaced by new economic activities linked to urban centers and digital markets. Modernization also manifests in cultural expressions and communal traditions. Social celebrations such as weddings, harvest festivals, and religious gatherings continue, but they are increasingly influenced by modern styles and technologies. Many families now hire professional photographers or share event highlights through social media, demonstrating a blending of old and new practices.

This illustrates how modernization does not erase traditions but modifies them, giving rise to hybrid cultural practices. Education has become one of the most prominent symbols of modernization in rural South Sulawesi. Government programs and scholarships have enabled more children to pursue secondary and higher education, leading to shifting aspirations among youth. Whereas parents may emphasize the continuity of agricultural roles, many young people seek professional careers in cities.

Such perspectives reveal a transformation in values, where education is regarded as the main path to social mobility and prosperity. Physical infrastructure improvements have also been central to modernization. Through state initiatives such as *Dana Desa*, rural areas have gained better road access, electricity, clean water, and public facilities. These developments not only enhance quality of life but also integrate villages more closely with urban economies and lifestyles.

This underscores how physical connectivity serves as a gateway to broader cultural and social changes. Finally, modernization is visible in evolving gender roles. Women, who previously concentrated on household responsibilities, are now increasingly active in business, education, and local leadership. The rise of small-scale female entrepreneurship, often supported by digital platforms, reflects both empowerment and shifting family dynamics.

Changes in Social Structures

Modernization in rural South Sulawesi has not only introduced new technologies and lifestyles but has also reshaped the very fabric of social structures that traditionally organized community life. These changes are evident in shifts in family systems, community leadership, patterns of social solidarity, and intergenerational relations. While traditional structures continue to hold cultural significance, modernization has gradually transformed the way social hierarchies, responsibilities, and interactions are organized.

One of the most prominent structural changes is the transformation of family organization. In the past, extended families living together under one household or in close proximity were the dominant arrangement, ensuring strong kinship ties and mutual support. Today, nuclear families have become increasingly common, with younger generations moving into their own houses or migrating to urban centers for education and employment. This reflects a move toward individual autonomy, signaling a departure from the collective living model that historically defined rural households.

Patterns of community leadership have also been affected. Traditional authority was once centered around elders and customary leaders, whose wisdom and lineage provided legitimacy. However, the rise of formal education and political decentralization has shifted leadership toward individuals with higher educational backgrounds, professional experience, or governmental connections. This demonstrates how modernization reconfigures power relations, privileging new forms of authority while reducing the dominance of purely traditional structures.

Social solidarity, once expressed primarily through collective labor in farming, rituals, and community projects, is also changing. While cooperative practices such as *gotong royong* (mutual assistance) still exist, they are less frequent and often replaced by monetary contributions. This indicates a shift from collective labor to individual-based economic exchanges, highlighting the influence of monetization in everyday interactions.

Intergenerational relations further illustrate structural transformation. Younger generations, empowered by education and technology, are increasingly challenging traditional hierarchies that privilege age over knowledge. Parents and elders continue to command respect, but younger voices now carry more weight in decision-making, especially when matters involve technology, markets, or modern education. Such examples show how modernization redistributes authority within families, allowing youth to play a more prominent role in household strategies and decision-making.

Religious and cultural institutions remain central in rural life, yet even these have adapted to modernization. Religious leaders continue to wield influence, but their teachings and practices are now often mediated through digital channels such as online sermons and social media discussions. At the same time, cultural rituals, though preserved, have become more flexible to accommodate modern work schedules and lifestyles. This shows how structural resilience coexists with adaptation, allowing traditions to survive within modernized contexts.

Gender dynamics represent another critical change in social structures. Traditionally, men occupied public leadership roles while women were confined largely to domestic spheres. Modernization, however, has enabled women to expand their roles in economic, social, and political spaces. Women entrepreneurs, teachers, and village officials are increasingly visible, reshaping gender expectations. This demonstrates how modernization supports more inclusive structures, enabling broader participation across gender lines.

Cultural Transformations

Modernization has brought profound cultural transformations to rural communities in South Sulawesi, reshaping values, traditions, and collective identities. These changes are not merely superficial but reflect deeper shifts in the ways communities perceive their heritage, negotiate with external influences, and adapt to the demands of contemporary life. While cultural continuity remains important, modernization has both challenged and redefined the meaning of tradition in everyday practices.

One of the most visible transformations is in the realm of rituals and traditional ceremonies. In the past, cultural ceremonies such as weddings, harvest celebrations, and religious festivals were elaborate, time-consuming, and deeply embedded in collective participation. Today, these ceremonies remain important but are often simplified due to time and financial constraints. This shift illustrates how modernization fosters efficiency and pragmatism while compressing cultural expression.

Language also reflects cultural transformation. Local languages such as Bugis, Makassarese, and Mandar are still widely spoken, but the influence of Indonesian as the national language and exposure to global languages such as English have reduced the dominance of local dialects in certain contexts. Younger generations often switch between languages depending on setting, with Indonesian being used in schools and workplaces. Such linguistic hybridity demonstrates cultural negotiation, where traditional identity coexists with modern linguistic practices.

Another dimension of cultural transformation is the integration of technology into cultural life. Traditional arts such as dance, music, and storytelling are increasingly being recorded, shared, and preserved through digital media. While some fear that these practices may lose their authenticity, others see technology as a means of cultural revitalization. This reflects how modernization, rather than erasing culture, can provide tools for its preservation and reinvention.

Food culture also shows signs of transformation. While traditional dishes remain central to local identity, the growing presence of modern eateries, packaged food, and fast-food chains has changed dietary habits. The intermingling of traditional and modern culinary practices highlights a generational divide in cultural consumption, where younger people are more open to external influences, while older generations prioritize continuity.

The role of dress and fashion has equally shifted under modernization. Traditional attire, once worn regularly during community gatherings, is now reserved for special occasions such as weddings or religious festivals. In everyday life, modern clothing styles dominate, reflecting both global fashion trends and urban influences. Yet, traditional attire retains symbolic importance as a marker of identity and pride. This demonstrates how cultural practices may contract in daily use but expand in symbolic meaning.

Religious practices also intersect with cultural transformations. Islam, as the dominant religion in South Sulawesi, continues to guide moral and social life, but the ways in which religion is practiced have adapted to modernization. For example, religious teachings are now disseminated through online platforms, and younger generations access sermons via YouTube or social media rather than exclusively through local mosques. This reflects a transformation in the medium of religious engagement without diminishing the importance of faith itself.

At the same time, modernization has brought new cultural values, such as individualism, consumerism, and competitiveness, which sometimes conflict with communal traditions of solidarity and humility. Younger generations often value personal achievement and material success, while older generations emphasize collective well-being and modesty. This tension illustrates the complex negotiation between traditional values and modern aspirations.

Community Responses

The processes of modernization in rural South Sulawesi have generated varied responses from community members, reflecting a complex mixture of acceptance, resistance, and adaptation. These responses are not uniform, as they depend on generational perspectives, levels of education, access to resources, and attachment to tradition. Understanding these responses provides critical insight into how modernization is negotiated at the grassroots level, where cultural values, economic practices, and social identities are directly confronted by change.

A common response observed across communities is selective adaptation. Many rural residents embrace aspects of modernization that they perceive as beneficial, particularly in areas such as education, health services, and technology, while remaining cautious or resistant toward changes that threaten traditional values. This indicates a pragmatic stance, where modernization is filtered through the lens of cultural preservation.

Another response is generational divergence. Younger members of the community often express enthusiasm for modernization, seeing it as an opportunity for mobility, self-expression, and global connection. In contrast, older generations frequently voice concern that modernization undermines communal solidarity and moral values. This intergenerational tension illustrates how modernization creates gaps in worldview within the same community, requiring negotiation between continuity and change. Economic transformations also elicit mixed responses. On one hand, the expansion of trade, access to markets, and new business opportunities are welcomed as means of improving livelihoods. Farmers and fishermen, however, often express anxiety about the decline of traditional occupations and the rising cost of living. Such anxieties underscore how modernization can create both economic opportunities and cultural vulnerabilities.

Religion has become a critical arena where community responses to modernization are articulated. While many community members actively embrace technological tools for religious learning, some leaders caution against over-reliance on digital platforms. This view highlights how communities negotiate the benefits of modernization while safeguarding the depth of religious and social ties. Community responses also include strategies of cultural preservation and revitalization. Local leaders and activists often initiate programs aimed at maintaining traditional arts, language, and rituals, sometimes by integrating them with modern platforms such as social media or tourism. This reflects an active response where modernization is not resisted but rather used as a tool to sustain heritage.

At the same time, there are examples of outright resistance, particularly among those who perceive modernization as a direct threat to identity and way of life. For instance, some rural residents express skepticism toward consumerism and the growing emphasis on material wealth. Such resistance underscores the moral dilemmas communities face in the face of rapid transformation. Interestingly, many responses also involve negotiation and compromise, where community members attempt to blend modern practices with traditional values. For example, in family life, parents often encourage children to pursue education and urban opportunities while still reminding them of local customs. This illustrates how modernization is reframed as a complementary force rather than a replacement of tradition.

DISCUSSION

The paper builds on this by going further not only to illustrate how modernization is being lived every day in one particular village in rural South Sulawesi but also to draw implications of these changes on the fields of management research, policy-making related to rural development, and strategy within organizations in these community contexts. By doing this, it asserts that rural groups, in the current context are no longer mere recipients of modernity but dynamic actors whose strategies of responding to organizational change, involvement of stakeholders, and decentralization should guide theories of organizational change, stakeholder engagement as well as decentralization. In the field of managerial studies, especially regarding development management and organizational behavior, these findings emphasize the centrality of embedded agency—that is, the ability of local actors to shape, adopt or resist outside influences— and as such it supports the argument by Samiee et al. (2021) on resistance- informed governance. These facts nudge us back to the idea of modernization as a co-productive

process and how it could only unfold by the way of negotiation, cultural grounding, and selective adoption rather than unilateral endowment.

In addition, the apparent alteration on social arrangement and leadership patterns contravenes the traditional change leadership research in grassroots and rural organizations. The declining importance of customary elders as a source of legitimacy and their replacement by educated officials connects to the contention made that legitimacy of leadership in the modern world is being fueled more by the semantic and cognitive capital, rather than the positional power. In terms of managing community development, this indicates that capacity-building should foster the growth of hybrid leaders who maintain local legitimacy whilst having access to modern education and networks hence it goes in line with hybrid governance systems promoted and instituted by Dotsey (2025). It also urges project designers to reconsider stakeholder mapping not as fixed hierarchies of genealogy but rather as dynamic assemblages in which young educated leaders and digitally networked women may exert a certain kind of power that no external agencies would have previously granted.

The intergenerational conflicts and changing value systems revealed in this research also has serious implications to learning and human resource development within development agencies and non-governmental organizations. This selective embracing of modernization, with the young more accepting mobile learning, urban employment dreams, and innovation, but the old insisting on group reciprocity and the old ways, sounds familiar to the double loop learning transformation in both method and values. Development organizations that intervene in like-minded settings are thus required to develop interventions as value-informed dialogues, mechanisms in which tradition and innovation engage in reflexive discourse as opposed to one-sided adoption. This would alleviate the traditional reflective practice theories propounded by Biswas (2023) and imply that an intergenerational learning environment should be established instead of a belief that modernization always takes place and has no retrogressions.

Just as urgent is the realization that monetization of social solidarity- the shift of labor-based mass action to payment-based donations generates both efficiency and equity crises. On the one hand, infrastructure can be improved through payment which may accelerate infrastructure build-up and which can lower opportunity cost, but on the other hand it also commodifies what has been commons-based reciprocity. This is congruent to what Javaid (2025) said about threats of commodification of social relations and the need by policymakers to be careful when implementing modernization schemes (like Village Fund schemes) to maintain communal capital. To managers of rural development projects, this implies creating incentives that support voluntary cooperation, including matching grants to communal work or recognition schemes to contributors, as opposed to strictly transactional arrangements. The observation concurs the resilience of social capital due to the purposeful efforts in building social capital in contemporary institutions.

The greatly increased exposure to digital technology and the external world comes with in-depth implications about small-scale rural entrepreneurship and micro-enterprise development. However, digital tools can be powerful when they can be supercharged with relevance to cultural context- in these cases, young people communicating via social media to share traditional dance or crafts. This fits in Scheyvens & van (2021) idea of capability framework whereby empowerment is not only useful access to resources but also the meaningful use in terms that are already considered valuable. Managerial interventions aimed at digital marketing training of rural entrepreneurs should therefore have cultural branding included in the training content, which would entail making use of the local identity as a source of competitive edge. This twin designation is reminiscent of practice-based innovation studies of Berg et al. (2021), who has been championing user-centered innovations built on local meanings.

The adaptation through change of meaning of rituals and language and the active maintenance of meaning in this substitutionary flexibility provides a powerful metaphor of change in organizations generally. In the management theory, this corresponds to Hübel (2022) process of organizing as continuous sensemaking. In rural South Sulawesi, communities do not discard traditions but reorganize them into new patterns--abbreviating rituals, using smartphones in preaching, mixing languages as to be effective under new time, technology, and economic pressures. To management scholars, such projects of adaptive reuse illustrate the strength of practical reinterpretation. To practitioners, it presents the importance of implementing interventions that do not interfere with cultural coherence but aid to the existence of evolutionary continuity-it has proposed modernization tools that are not fixed and riveted but rather inchoate and dynamic.

CONCLUSION

This has shown that modernization in rural South Sulawesi is not a lineal process and neither an externally imposed process but a bargaining process that is influenced by social organization, culture and the desires of the people. The results indicate that modernization has given rise to novel kind of leadership legitimization, market-based activities and digital technologies, but at the cost of the continuation of conventional reciprocity, family-based power and traditional cultures. Nevertheless, the evidence is also that rural communities are not simply

passive receivers of change; they play an active role in redefining modernization as it fits their zone of concern and selectively adopting modernizing forces that leave something about their cultural identity that they still find valuable. To the management, this re-emphasizes that the rural communities can be considered strategic actors that can provide organizational learning and hybrid adaptation. Planners and other policy makers and practitioners must thus not pursue modernization as an idea that should be applied carefully in a similar way, but an initiative, that recognizes indigenous autonomy, promotes cultural fortitude, and enhances the role of society in the governing process. The South Sulawesi case demonstrates that modernization as a version of negotiation and adaptation can be a driver of the sustainable rural development process without sacrificing values to which the communal life is anchored.

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