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The Institutional Framework of Participatory Mechanisms to Identify the Needs of Poor People : the Case of Vietnam

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank in Vietnam
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
BTC/CTB	Belgian Technical Cooperation/Cooperation Technique Belge
CEM	Committee of Ethnic Minorities
CG	Consultative Group
CPV	Communist Party of Vietnam
CPC	Commune People Committee
CPRGS	Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy
CPFC	Committee for Population, Family and Children
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
csQCA	Crisp Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis
CCF	Christian Children's Fund of Australia (CCF Australia)
CDP	Rights of Complaints, Denunciations and Petitions
DANIDA	Danish International Development Assistance
DECID& SUPER	People Decide
DELPA	Deliberative Participation
DFID	Department for International Development
DCs and TCs	Developing and Transition Countries
DISCU	People Discuss
DOLISA	Department of Labors Invalid Social Affairs
DPI	Department of Planning and Investment
DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
DOET	Department of Education and Training
DOH	Department of Health
DOT	Department of Trade
DPC	District People Committee
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam
Experience	Historical Experience (in participatory mechanism)
FPAHE	Fund for Poverty Alleviation and Hunger Eradication
Facilities	Working Facilities
FA	Farmer Associations
GOVN	Government of Vietnam
GSO	General Statistics Office
GOD	Government Personnel Department
GDD	Grassroots Democracy Decree
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
HDI	Human Development Index
HEPR	Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction
HEPR-JC	National Target Program on HEPR and Job Creation
HHs	Households
INGOs	International Non-Government Organizations
IAD Framework	Institutional Analysis and Development Framework
I-PRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
IFAD	International Fund for Agriculture Development

IMPLEMEN	People Implementation
Incentives	Incentives of Coordination
Information	Information Sharing
JBIC	Japanese Bank for International Cooperation
KAP	Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice
KNOW	People Know
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MOs	Mass Organizations
MPDF	Mekong Private Sector Development Facility
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOFI	Ministry of Fisheries
MOT	Ministry of Trade
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOED	Ministry of Education and Training
MOCI	Ministry of Culture and Information
MOSTE	Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment
MOT	Ministry of Transportation
MOLISA	Ministry of Labours Invalid Social Affairs
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MOC	Ministry of Construction
m2c2	Is ability of the poor people whether they can read or write
m1c2	Is gender coded of male or female
m9c1	Is represented for a family of invalids, sick war, veterans, martyr, and Vietnamese heroic mothers
m9c2	Is represented for a family of lonely elderly, disabled who need to receive regular social subsidy
m9c3	Is represented for a classified as a poor or very poor household by the commune authorities
m9c7	Assistance of mass organization (political institutions)
m9c4	Provision of the free health insurance to poor households
m9c5	Provision of the Poor Household Certificate
m9c6	Using the Poor Household Certificate for health consultation of the poor people
m9c9	Exemption from agricultural land use tax
m9c11	Provision of loan for production
NCSSH	National Centre for Social Science and Humanity
NTP-HEPR	National Target Program - HEPR
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
NCEMA	National Committee on Ethnic and Mountainous Areas
NCPFP	National Committee on Population and Family Planning
NSB	National Steering Board
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OGB	Oxfam GB
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PAR	Public Administration Reform
PECO	People's Councils
PIP	Public investment project

PTF	Poverty Task Forces
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessment
PPP	Private Public Partnership
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PPAs	Participatory Poverty Assessment
PPC	Provincial People Committee
PSP	Public Service Providers
PR	Poverty Reduction
PWG	Poverty Working Group
QCA	Qualitative Comparative Analysis
SCommittee - SC	Rules of Provincial HEPR Steering Committee
S&C	Micro Credit Group
SC	Steering Committee
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
t1	is total income of the poor people
t15	is total expenditure of the poor people
USA	United States of America
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
VASS	Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences
VBARD	Vietnam Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
VBSP	Vietnam Bank for Social Policies
VDG	Vietnam Development Goal
VDP	Village Development Planning
VFF	Vietnamese Fatherland Front
VHLSS	Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey
VDIC	Vietnam Development Information Center
VILEA	Village Leader/Village Managers
VSB	Vietnam State Bank
VUFO	Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations
WB	World Bank
WU	Women Union
WTO	World Trade Organization

LEGAL TERMINOLOGY (Vietnam)

Laws are passed by the National Assembly and are Vietnam's highest form of legal direction;

Ordinances are passed by the Standing Committee of the National Assembly when the Assembly is not in session;

Decrees are passed by the Government and generally implement Laws and Ordinances, Laws are often supplemented by more detailed "Regulations", Vietnamese name: ND-CP;

Circulars are issued by individual ministries and usually provide guidance as to how a particular ministry will administer a Law, Ordinance or Decree;

Official Letters are also issued by ministries. They are meant to be minor decisions about implementation matters, and may not be for public distribution;

Guidelines are not legal instruments. There are policy outlines issued by the prime minister indicating that governmental committees should be set up to deal with issues. The recital of each legal instrument normally sets out the other legal instrument to which it is subordinate. If a legal instrument is intended to replace an earlier one this will usually be mentioned near the end of the new instrument.

Reform "Doi Moi": This process happened in 1986 with taking into serious consideration of relation between hunger and poverty and national security.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. Background

In recent decades, most developing countries have had to take on the challenge of poverty, as a first national priority. Poverty reduction is also receiving increasing attention at the international level, and it has become an important explicitly stated development goal by many international institutions, also because of its implications in terms of security. In 2004, between 300 and 420 million people were trapped in chronic poverty (The Chronic Poverty Research Centre¹). Indeed, there is evidence that food shortage is a strong determinant of potential rebellions and other forms of collective violence² -- and as many as 854 millions³ poor people worldwide are currently in a food shortage situation and 1.1 billions people still live in poverty status (UNDP 2002).

In context of successive long-term wars and embargos, Vietnam became one of the poorest countries in the world in the 1980s. In Vietnam as in other countries, poverty is not only a security matter; it is also a broader societal issue, also with political implications, “one of most significant phenomena of poverty is affecting political dynamics in Vietnam” (Rama, 2003). This problem of poverty, and the goal of poverty reduction, is now defined as the priority issue on which action needs to be partaken, and it has risen as one of the core items of the political decision-making agenda in Vietnam as well as in other developing countries.

The most extreme form of poverty is destitution: “as a condition, destitution flows from processes of political economy, some of which become institutionalized within state practice and law. The destitute are not only considered as non-people in relation to the institutional functioning of state, market, and civil society institutions, but are often actively expelled from these institutional arenas” (Harriss-White⁴, 2005). The continuation of poverty over time, or chronic poverty, is thus an inherently political problem, both in terms of its reproduction and reduction. The persistence of poverty reflects its institutionalization within social and political norms and institutions, and its legitimate within political discourse and by political elites, and the failure of the poorest groups to gain political representation thereon (Hickey and Bracking⁵, 2005).

¹ “The Chronic Poverty Report 2004–05”. Institute for Development Policy & Management. Precinct Centre Oxford, Manchester, UK. p.5

² *Serious violence in Haiti (2008) consequently there were 5 people died and 20 were injured because of food shortage and high food price.*

³ UNDP Vietnam (Report 2007)

⁴ Harris-White B., 2005. *Destitution and the Poverty of its Politics – with Special Reference to South Asia*. World Development, Vol.33 No.6: 881-891.

⁵ Hickey S and Bracking S. (2005). *Special edition of World Development, Exploring the politics of poverty reduction: how are the poorest represented?* Vol. 33, No 6, June: pp. 851-865

One of the key factors of implementing a successful poverty reduction strategy is an institutional framework (Bedi⁶, 2006). Institutional arrangements are crucial as they provide the government at all levels with a framework within which to formulate and implement policies. According to Bastiaensen⁷ (2005) there is a claim, it should not be able to confuse individualized symptoms and institutional determinants of poverty. This claim also directs attention away from “the poor” themselves and toward the institutions that shape their environment as the prime object of poverty reduction. This requires the promotion of institutional change.

In a discussion on institutions and poverty alleviation in Africa, the first line of business in the fight against poverty must be to understand the reconstitution and reconstruction of the state through democratic constitution making to provide institutions that enhance growth and wealth creation (Mbaku⁸, 2007). Institution building has a wide variety of goals that have always been at the core of overcoming underdevelopment in the developing countries. These goals affect directly to the poverty situation of poor people which include enhancing good governance (accountability and responsibility and transparency, rule of law); improving the public administrative and regulatory systems; improving the provision of basic public services such as clean water, road, education and health care.

At the international level, an institutional framework has been established for fighting poverty. In particular, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were set up at September 2000 UN Millennium summit, with a stated aim of reducing world poverty by half by 2015⁹. According to Graham¹⁰ (2002), empirical research has consistently demonstrated that countless development efforts have failed because the developing countries often lack institutions with the ability to sustain the achievements of development efforts. Poor countries can not absorb external resources without the ability to manage the poverty reduction policies; therefore, there is a well-known advice that initiatives should focus on the institutions that enhance poor countries' capacity to implement and oversee the poverty reduction strategy process.

Vietnam made considerable progress in reducing poverty during the period 1986 – 2007. It is estimated that in the year of 1986, seven out of every ten Vietnamese were living in poverty (it means the poverty rate stood at 70%). Two decades later, and after some reforms and economic growth policies – the incidence of poverty has halved. The latest survey data in 2007 shows that 17% of the population is currently under poverty line. In this period of socio-economic transformations, social and economic indicators have also improved significantly. Also, Vietnam is one of transition countries from the socialism countries before with complicated war history along 20th century; naturally it was the case to attract political science for a study from the “reform”, the initial conditions approximately (1986-2007). Vietnam contains rich cultural social

⁶ Bedi Tara, 2006. *Beyond the Numbers: Understanding the Institutions for Monitoring Poverty Reduction Strategies*. The World Bank. 2006: pp. 9-53.

⁷ Bastiaensen J. et al., 2005. *Poverty Reduction as a Local Institutional Process*. World Development, vol. 33, 2005: 979-990

⁸ Mbaku, 2007. *Institutions and Poverty Alleviation in Africa*. Africa and Asian Studies 6 (2007): 107-134.

⁹ See website: <http://www.un.org/millennium/summit.htm>

¹⁰ Graham Carol, 2002. *Strengthening Institutional Capacity in Poor Countries*. Policy Brief No.98 April 2002. The Bretton Woods Institutions (World Bank and IMF) pp. 1-4.

communities grounded with 55 significant ethnic minorities with global impact of international institutions toward more and more democracy in the momentum¹¹. For all these reasons, the Vietnam case is very interesting to study the institutional framework of participatory mechanism for poverty reduction (Rihoux, 2008).

The aim of this dissertation is not to discuss the development or construction of a specific institutional framework for poverty reduction. Rather, we focus on two coherent components of the *identification* of the poor people's needs: (a) "what" the needs of the poor people are, and (b) "how" these needs can be identified. The second component will lead us to concentrate on the establishment, operation and establishment of *institutional rules of participatory mechanisms* for identifying the needs of poor people. In more concrete terms, we shall try to identify the configurations of conditions (in terms of institutional rules) which best enable the participation of poor people for their needs' identification.

Hence, this research pursues both applied and theoretical goals. The main operational/applied goal of our research program is to identify the combinations of both formal rules of the political system and social cultural norms of the communities at the grassroots level, in the specific case of Vietnam where there is unresponsiveness of many institutions to the needs of poor people. Hopefully, some of our conclusions could be expanded to other countries in the developing world. At the more theoretical level, our goal is to try to integrate different theoretical streams: three forms of new institutionalism (rational choice/economics, sociology and history) through the lens of the institutional analysis and development framework of Ostrom (2005), so as to explain the institutional rules of participatory mechanisms at the collective choice level. This is an actual response to the following realistic suggestion "One must study not only why citizens participate, but why decision-makers are responsive" (Verba¹², 1967).

2. The Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this research is coherently to gain a better understanding of what are the poor people's needs and what are the elements and relationships of institutions for identifying the needs of poor people, particularly how to identify the best configurations of institutional rules in participatory mechanisms. The coherence is a notion that if the chapters of the research can easily coexist "the coexistence of two entities may hint that they are coherent" in the following demonstration: If $E \cap E' \neq \emptyset$ is for structural, theoretical reasons, systematic data. The fitness of each chapter is improved by the existence of the others but it is less than complementary since this does not imply that the mix between E and E' gives the best result among any possible association of alternative chapters.

From the above-mentioned aim of the research, we formulate one over-arching research question: "how to establish an institutional framework of participatory mechanisms to identify

¹¹ Vietnam becomes the full member of WTO in 2007.

¹² Verba S., 1967. *Democratic Participation*. Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. Vol. 373. p.53.

the needs of poor people?”. However such a single question cannot address the three separate components specified as follows: institutional rules, participatory mechanisms, and the needs of poor people which may exist in different domains of social political-economic sciences. Therefore, it is the best to establish four research questions as follows:

1st What are the poor people’s needs?

2nd How to measure the needs of poor people?

3rd What are the elements and configurational institutions of participatory mechanisms at the grassroots level (operational situation)?

4th “How are institutional rules of the participatory mechanisms established at the level of collective choice situations, in order to operate the poor people needs’ identification”?

In this dissertation, each research question is presented in a separate chapter to ensure a clear solution for each question. The connectivity of the chapters is based on the underlying overall hypothesis, or rather “working assumption”: The core institutional problem is the unresponsiveness of many institutions to the needs of poor people – this is to be explained through the logical and causal approach in the research.

Actually, more than 10 research questions were formulated at the early stage of this research. These first research questions proposed to concentrate mainly on the participatory mechanism in poverty reduction, on the role and functions and responsibilities of collective actors, and state agencies and NGOs in poverty reduction, on examining the possible network and resource flows and “paths”, on the coordination of poverty reduction actors, etc. After due consideration, however, we decided to reject six research questions to ensure a not-too-broad focus of the research, also taking serious consideration of the following reasons:

1st In any poverty reduction strategy, there is a set of needs for each individual poor that need to be identified. In fact, some institutions should be established for identifying these needs of the poor, at the operational level. When the demands of poor people are not yet considered to be the need, logically there is no institution to be set up for identifying this need of the poor. Moreover, because of human diversity, the needs of poor people are varied according to their political socio-economic conditions, the poor people’s characteristics (endogenous variables), information, participants (actors), position, motivation, resources. The process of identifying the needs of the poor people is difficult and costly to predict. The needs of individual poor people could be very diverse, which requires more than one institution to be involved in the process if the needs of the poor people are identified thoroughly. Therefore, with regards to the first question (see above), there are two hypotheses as follows: (i) the needs of poor people in both dimensions (domains of poverty) and capability have been fully revealed or “exposed” in participatory poverty assessments (PPA); (ii) more effectively in poverty reduction, if dimensions of chronic poverty are selected using a 'mixed' method approach that combines the selection of a “static set of core dimensions” complementary with “deliberative participation – see concept framed in Chapter 3”

so that by normative framework, there is a multi-dimensional responsiveness of institutions to the needs of poor people (more than one institution responsive to each of poor needs is more effective).

2nd It is different from multi-dimensional poverty, the capabilities of the poor ought to be measured in needs' assessment. Obviously, in both theory and practice, if we want to identify the needs, we have to measure the needs. In a complementary support to chapter 2, the 2nd research question is set up as follows: how to measure the capability of the poor people? Although there are various methods in the world (see Chapter 2) and 6 known methods used in Vietnam to measure the poverty dimensions (such as household expenditure, poverty mapping, income based, local classification, self-assessment, wealth ranking, human development index), these methods have not addressed the demand of measuring poverty and the human capabilities of poor people. In our chapter 2, there is an application to focus on how to measure the capability of poor people technically.

3rd According to Ostrom¹³ (2006), following a more vertical approach, there are multiple levels of institutional analysis; it is useful to distinguish three levels such as operational level, collective choice level, and constitutional-choice level. In Florensa¹⁴, institutional changes take place on the basis of combinations of the values of various endogenous and exogenous factors, which can involve different levels of institutional arrangement. This suggests establishing research direction at least at two levels: "operational" and "collective choice" level. At the operational situation level, the sets of rules are themselves nested in hierarchical levels. The actors are directly affected by the operational rules in operational situations structuring what they must, must not, or may do. The poor needs' identification is an operational process. This knowledge suggests us to establish the 3rd research question so as to go deeply into the grass roots level, with elements and configurative relationships of institutions, particularly focusing on the participation of the poor people. The existence of one institution can not be observed without the presence of the needs of poor people in the poor needs' identification. Hierarchically, this research question lead us to make many efforts to clarify the relationship between the needs assessment of poor people and the existing coherent institutions at the operational situation level (grass roots situation) within the Vietnamese case. For the 3rd research questions, there are two hypotheses to be examined as follows:

- (i) At grassroots level ("operation level"), the participation of poor people in the needs' identification process is affected by a causal configuration of external conditions such as deliberative participation , people's council, village leader, rights of complaints, denunciations and petitions, mass organizations (VN Fatherland Front - VFF), civil society. Noted that during the research program, we considered to reject some variables exiting in macro economic and political domain;

¹³ Ostrom E., 2006. *Understanding Institutional Diversity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press: 186-210

¹⁴ Florensa, 2004. *Institutional Stability and Change: A logic Sequence for Studying Institutional Dynamics*. IASCP, 9-13 August 2004: 2.

- (ii) Unresponsiveness of many institutions depends on the income/expenditure and intrinsic interconnection of internal poor people's characteristics. Around the needs of poor people, there are 6 propositions to describe the causal relationship amongst independent variables (or conditions) represented for the poor characteristics, and 6 outcomes or "dependent variables":
- Assistance of state mass organizations (political institutions) is dependent on the income/expenditure of poor households and some of the poor people's characteristics (capability, gender and social class);
 - Provision of free health insurance to poor households is dependent on the income/expenditure of the poor households and the poor people's characteristics;
 - Provision of the Poor Household Certificate provided by the commune authority is dependent on the income/expenditure of poor households and the poor people's characteristics;
 - Using the Poor Household Certificate for health consultation is affected by / is dependent on the income/expenditure of poor households and the poor people's characteristics;
 - Exemption from agricultural land use tax depends on the income/expenditure of poor households and the poor people's characteristics;
 - Provision of production loan ("rural credit") is dependent on the income/expenditure of poor households and the poor people's characteristics.

4th These rules at the grass roots situation were crafted in a collective choice situation which is itself structured by collective choice rules. At collective choice arena, which actors, in what positions, chosen how, given information, and an assessment of benefits costs can make operational rules, the institutional rules of participatory mechanism must be established under configurational rules at collective choice level. Logically, if we want to establish the institutional framework (operational rules), we have to pay attention to the collective choice level where there is a struggle for institutionalization among different actors. Actually, in this 4th research question, we have to answer concrete questions such as how to establish operational rules in a configuration of collective choice rules such as incentives, physical variables, attributes of the communities, trust, norms, values, culture, identity, standard, heuristics, constitutional or procedures (*see figure 3, p.136). It is on this topic of the deep connection of the collective level and the operational level that Chapter 3 of this dissertation focuses. Moreover, Chapter 4 is to complete the aim of the research to contribute to develop the institutional framework of participatory mechanisms to tackle the overall research assumption -- "the core institutional problem --is the unresponsiveness of many institutions to the needs of poor people".

Finally, Chapter 4 provides an overall "synthesis" of the three previous chapters, as chapter 4 concentrates on the following hypotheses which closely contributed to explain to above overall

hypothesis of this dissertation: (i) there is unresponsiveness of the institutions to the needs of the poor people if the non-poor establish the institutional rules; (ii) in the condition “the non-poor is key actor”, there is still unresponsiveness of the institutions to the needs of the poor people if the mixed non poor and the poor establish together the institutional rules (iii) in the condition “the poor is key actor”, there is responsiveness of the institutions to the needs of the poor people if the mixed non poor and the poor establish together the institutional rules.

3. Research Methodology

Following Ostrom, we accept that institutions are invisible, as rules at one level are created at another level; and as rules can operate configurationally (Ostrom¹⁵ 2007, pp.22-25). We also take seriously into consideration the diversity of the needs of the poor people, which reflects human diversity (this is discussed in more details in chapter 2). Therefore, in the first part of the dissertation, we mainly rely on quantitative methods in political economy. In the second chapter, the method used is consistent with the research question “describing needs”. The descriptive approach was taken into account to review the theories of needs, and explored triangulating by perceptions about the poors’ needs and institutions from individual poor and non-poor (individual non-poor, local authorities, organised poor, mass organisations, civil society organisations). The demonstration is wrapped up in identifying the needs of the poor people in context of Vietnam.

In the third chapter, the methods used exploit the strength of the quantitative method. The quantitative method was applied because we could collect fine-grained and relevant data, particularly data on poor people’s capabilities, which is useful for exploring the powerful and rigorous strength of quantitative methods in describing the relative importance of causal conditions and outcomes. The factor analysis and model of regression analysis were applied for substantive findings in this third chapter about the endogenous poor characteristics and their capabilities and functionings.

In the second part of the dissertation, the effective comparison of the communes and provinces used the Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)¹⁶: Charles Ragin (1987) and Benoît Rihoux (2002), Varone et al (2006). Indeed, “from a small number of cases, the QCA method makes it possible to derive patterns (combinations of factors, or conditions) that link the cases”. In these fourth and fifth chapters, the QCA approach was chosen because this method allows a combination of case and variable-based comparisons, even if there is no availability of structural data of institutions in many communes (“grassroots level in Vietnam”) and provinces for the comparative analysis. The QCA approach allows to compare systematically a “small N” of cases, both cross-commune and cross-province. Specifically the csQCA technique allows to test the

¹⁵ Ostrom, 2007. *Institutional Rational Choice: An assessment of the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework*. Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis. Indiana University; pp. 22-25

¹⁶ Charles RAGIN (1994). *Constructing Social Research. The Unity and Diversity of Method* (London, Sage, 1994). Benoît Rihoux et Heike Grimm (2006). *Innovative Comparative Methods for Policy Analysis. Springer Science*; pp. 1-9.

configuration of institutional variables (invisible) at grassroots level both ex post and ex ante (this is unique in csQCA method).

The QCA approach allows the mode of transparent participation of researchers and practitioners having controversial arguments on institutional framework for poverty reduction at grassroots level in Vietnam. In fact, our QCA analysis helps to bridge the economics and political science perspectives through the case of Vietnam. Thus, the solutions found identify set of multiple causes -- one of QCAs' main assets is precisely to deal with configurations of causes. In the QCA approach, exploiting the epistemological case based knowledge and logic of comparative method and causal mechanism (in contrast with single method such as statistical and economic tools), allows the identification of more than one unique path to an outcome – the participatory mechanism with more than one combination of conditions may account for a result; this is also useful for pluralist/participative analysis (Rihoux, 2006).

The QCA approach makes the research possible because available data on structure and functions of institutions in developing countries is mostly geared towards quantification and broad cross-country comparative analysis. Also, there is very little data that captures public perception of institutions' roles and performance.

Besides the participation of the poor people is intrinsic interconnection of external and internal factors related to the poor people with many related variables. I am also aware of some limitation of csQCA technique to this approach such as we could not include many variables (including the poor characteristics in the QCA model), a problem of uniqueness might occur consequently. So the solution is applied a combination of QCA and model of regression analysis with more qualitative analysis of the configuration of institutions with intrinsic interconnections of institutions and actors “who are the poor people” in the participatory mechanism. The regression model analysis is also more concerned with the deductive testing of hypotheses while the QCA technique is inductively generating the hypotheses. Naturally, this is the best choice to deal with research questions on grassroots institutions and the poor people's participation for identifying their needs in Vietnam case.

Chapter 4 is an overall “synthesis” of the four previous Chapters. In nature, it is more difficult as we have to deal with institutional dynamics of participatory mechanism for actors in collective choice situation to establish the operational rules (“institutional framework”). If we review the theoretical literature, in the past three decades scientists have differed a great deal in their preferred approach to explain the world in institutional theories. There are various literatures, they have compared and contrasted the different approaches to institutional theories, specifically distinguishing the “rational choice” institutionalism coming out of political science and economics with the branch of institutionalism coming out of sociology and history (Wendt, 1987; Daniel W. Bromley, 1989, DiMaggio & Powel, 1991; Foss, 1995; Ross, 1995; Goodin 1996; Hall& Taylor, 1996; Ruggie, 1998; Peters, 1999, Campbell and Pederson, 2001, 2004; Lowndes, 2002; March & Olsen, 1984, 1989, 1995, 2006). The institutional analysis and development framework (IAD framework) draws upon rational choice theory to identify the general relationships among institutional, situational and exogenous variables in explaining collective

choice situation. Thus, the three new institutionalisms (rational choice, sociology, history) through the lens of IAD framework are complementarily mobilized to establish the model of institutionalizing rules at collective choice situation. The integration of three institutionalisms declared that they are complementary shown by the model of institutionalized rules. Thereby if two elements E and E' are said to be complementary if the performance R of the conjunction of E and E' is superior to any other mix of elements with precise definition:

$$R(E, E') > R(E, A) \forall A \neq E' \text{ \& } R(E, E') > R(B, E') \forall B \neq E$$

The model of choice rules at collective choice level is evidenced by three cases in Vietnam. This definition associates with the idea of “synthesis” in the chapter five. It means to gather all previous research results toward the research question “How institutional rules of the participating mechanism are configured and changed in identifying the needs of the poor people (collective choice situation)”. Going along with the purpose of the synthesis chapter, there are three approaches used for handling the last research question described as follows:

1/ « top-down » approach: starting from the perceptions, actions and policies, relationship of actors including the decision-makers for explaining the establishment of institutional rules. Once again, the QCA approach continues to apply for analyzing the configurations of institutional rules at local level (provinces) in the state administrative system working for poverty reduction.

2/ « bottom-up » approach: starting from the theoretical basic needs, perceptions of the individual poor people for explaining the establishment of institutional rules. We will study the changing operational rules from collective choice situation through the impact of participatory poverty reduction (PPA) for policy decision making.

3/ the third approach focuses on the collective actors « in between » the individual poor people and the grassroots institutions. 3 main categories are examined: a/ the « organized poor »; b/ other « non-poor » organizations who want to support the poor and work for poverty reduction; c/ other coordinated institutions of “public service provider” and mass organisations. More specifically in Vietnam, more qualitatively, we also conducted some interviews, towards another type of public: the “political decision-makers” themselves, to tap their own perceptions of cross-coordination of how poverty should be fought – then we could “cross” (meaning: confront), more qualitatively, their perspectives with the perspectives of the stakeholders (with the information we have collected in the survey).

4. Framing the research analysis

We implement a strategy of mixed methods for data analysis which combining qualitative, configurational comparative and quantitative (regression) data analysis methods:

- *qualitative content analysis*: a/ Understanding the initial perception frames of poor people with regards to their needs (what are the poor people’s needs, self-defined?) as well as the perception frames of the non-poor (including decision-makers and key players of intermediate organizations) on the poor people’s needs; b/ Examining the evolution of these perception frames before and after some initiatives have been implemented (NTP-HEPR, PPAs, micro credit, water user groups, cross-coordination institutions).

- *configurational comparative analysis (Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) / Model of Regression Analysis; Integration of Three New Institutionalisms through the lens of IAD Framework)*: a/ Examining

patterns of interaction and perception amongst poor people, local leaders, responsible cadres for poverty reduction in operational choice level and collective choice level b/ Comparing the configurations of collective actors and their possible impacts (outcomes).

5. The Data

These analyses have been conducted on some data systematically gathered in the context of Vietnam, for the period 1996-2006. The data (qualitative, through interviews; quantitative, through surveys as well as text data from Vietnam official sources and NGO's) were collected, at different levels, amongst different informants such as unorganized poor people, political bodies, economic bodies, social bodies, state agencies, NGOs. Because that the poor people are mainly located in rural areas (*see pages 40-42) where the inequalities are increased by market mechanisms. Therefore, the survey was conducted in rural area of Vietnam to collect primary data. For quantitative analysis, the research used both the primary data from the survey and the secondary data originated from the Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey (VHLSS) which was carried out in 2002 by the General Statistics Office (GSO) with financial support from the Japanese Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and technical assistance from the World Bank (WB). The secondary data sources also were mobilized from the PPAs in Vietnam which led by INGOs and in Vietnam.

The primary data is used mainly in csQCA approach in chapter 3 (*see map 3: *Selective Communes: page 89*)) and chapter 4 (*see Appendix 20, p.223). For this part of the study, we follow a more constructivist paradigm: the researcher defines his role as a facilitator to mobilize the participation of informants and to seek perceptions of informants from different groups for the assessment of the outcome and conditions. The findings ("data") are constructed from the researcher's understanding of information provided by informants (see above paragraph). Following this paradigm, the *Participatory Assessment* approach is employed to maximize interaction between informants from different groups. This helps build up the understanding of "raw data" for the csQCA approach. Also, this enables us to reveal different perspectives from various groups for cross-checking; deepen understanding to emerging themes. "Raw data" is mainly qualitative; each set of data is presented in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 in detail. Limited quantitative data gained from desk reviews provides additional information to examine the interview sessions. Qualitative data provides information to build up rich descriptions and evidences for the assessment of the conditions to help create "raw data" for the research.

6. Work Plan

The first part of this dissertation develops "what" are the needs of the poor people and "how" to measure the needs of poor people (*see pages 47-53). The second part of this dissertation deals with "what" are grassroots institutions and the participation, and how to establish institutional rules in participatory mechanisms for identifying the needs of poor people (*see pages 81-165).

Naturally, this dissertation is conducted both deductively and inductively. The first part focuses on defining and constructing all variables related to needs of poor people, following both a theoretical and practical approach. The needs of poor people were described and measured in the

context of Vietnam where there is an incomplete measure of needs' identification and problematic methodology in the measurement of human capabilities of poor people, especially weighting the options for multidimensional poverty measures. The second part focuses on the operation and establishment of institutional rules at operation level and collective choice situation. *Firstly* the elements and relationships of grassroots institutions and configuration of institutional variables and the participation are studied in the context of Vietnam. It is hypothesized through 6 propositions that the poor participation is affected by the poor characteristics, through both exogenous and endogenous factors. So the relation of institutional participation and the poor people's characteristics are studied in a combination with studies in institutional configurations at grassroots level. *Secondly*, the configuration of institutional rules in the participatory mechanism is studied at collective choice situation. The actors (the non-poor and the poor) are interacted with the institutional rules in the collective choice situation – it is those interactions which are studied. The second part focuses on “how” to establish the institutional rules in the participatory mechanisms and “how” rules operate so as to identify the needs of the poor people at grassroots level.

The plan of the research was developed to optimize available resources. Thus the research is divided into two parts; for each part, all analyses are divided in a three-step procedure: Hypothesis – Test – Conclusion. The hypothesis aims at building the proposition to be tested in Chapter 3. The first part is devoted to a review of the theories and to construct the variables and their measurements on the needs of poor people with related institutions. The second part attempts to build the model of “configurational rules at collective choice level” from three strands of new institutionalisms through the lense of the IAD framework. The model is tested through three terms in Vietnam: “top-down” and “bottom-up” and “in-between individual poor, organised poor and grassroots actors.

The overall conclusions wrap up the demonstration, re-examining the initial hypotheses. The sub-sections present, respectively: the summary of the findings with regards to the four core research questions, policy implications of the research program, and paths for further works. In this effort of synthesis, we shall try to distinguish what is specific to the Vietnam case, and what could be expanded to other developing countries.

Finally, let us formulate a general note of caution on the differences between the current Vietnamese context, on the one hand, and pluralist, liberal democratic contexts. This dissertation, in fact, mobilizes different theories linked to institutional arrangements which are mostly those of liberal democracies. Even though Vietnam is currently undergoing a reform process, it is of course not a “liberal democracy” if we use criteria of Western countries, because of the country's single party and centralist, technocratic functioning. However, we shall try to demonstrate that it can be useful to use those theories specifically at the local level in Vietnam, where there is grassroots participation and some level of freedom in the participation. The Vietnamese

Grassroots Democracy Decree¹⁷ is mentioned as such in technical papers by the World Bank, the UNDP and also in the academic literature -- though indeed it operates in a context which does not meet the criteria of liberal democracies.

¹⁷ Three of the countries in the world with recent innovations in the legal framework for grassroots democracy are Bolivia, India and Vietnam (World Bank, 1999). See Narayan Deepa et al, 1999. *Global Synthesis: Consultations with the Poor*. Poverty Group World Bank. September 20, 1999. p. 27, 1st paragraph.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

1. Some important over-arching points

The overall hypothesis “in the Vietnamese context, the core institutional problem is the unresponsiveness of many institutions to the needs of poor people” has been thoroughly explained. On the one hand, given the nature of poverty and human diversity, this reflects in the diversity of needs of poor people in different dimensions such as income, commodities, resources, justice, liberties, equity, political freedom. Therefore, the income-based or even the static set of core dimensions could not address the variable of the poors’ needs solely; the poor needs have to be identified in a participatory way – pluralist, interactive and multidimensional, associated with facilitation of poor people’s own analysis. On the other hand, the institutional logic does not empower the poor themselves as they are kept at the periphery, and therefore they can not directly have an exact say in actual decision making though the institutional logic could allow some needs of poor people to be taken into account. The only favourable combination of conditions which empowers the poor lies at least partly outside of the institutionalized channels: the emerging strong civil society condition in a combination with strong justice which is more independent at the local level could provide an enabling environment for the poor to actually participate through the justice condition such as rights of complaints, denunciations and petitions to ensure the responsiveness of institutions to their needs..

In other words, for the highest participation level and quality participation of poor people, if the institutional rules are established in the process mixed by the non-poor + the poor, if the key actor is poor (dominant), surely this will lead to responsiveness of institutions to the needs of poor people. Apparently, this goes along with a question: why the first question of justice is the question of power (*see Forst¹⁸ R., 2007, 2008). This helps reinforce the human rights framework (in OHCHR) to empower the poor – the right of the poor is to participate in collective choice level.

From the Vietnam case, we can indeed see that the participation of highly empowered poor people in the collective choice situation play the key role to ensure the responsiveness of institutions to their needs. The relationship of empowerment of the poor to be key actor outside the formal institutionalised channels and responsiveness of institutions must be in strong conditions of deliberative participation and mass organisations, justice which are formatted in political institutions and village leaders embedded in social cultural norms of the communities: “the social functionings has significant effect with most of socio-economic characteristics of poor people”.

¹⁸ Forst R. 2007. *First Things First. Redistribution, Recognition and Justification*. European Journal of Political Philosophy, 6, 2007, pp. 291-304.

2. Summary of findings and answers to the four core questions

The aim of the research was to establish an institutional framework of participatory mechanisms to identify the needs of poor people. The summary of findings will be presented according to the four core questions which were laid out in the introduction. Each summary of findings replies to these research questions following the sequence of the chapters, and bearing in mind the underlying overall hypothesis: The core institutional problem is the unresponsiveness of many institutions to the needs of poor people.

What are the poor people needs in Vietnam?

For identifying the needs of poor people, our effort concentrated firstly on this research question (*see pages 47-63).

Indeed, the needs of poor people have to be individually defined to address the diverse forms of deprivation which define poverty. Following our descriptive method, the nature of poverty and human diversity are natural phenomena which are reflected in the diverse needs of poor people in different spaces such as income and commodities, resources, capability and functioning, liberties, political freedom, social justice & equality. The needs are more diverse than any practical evaluation conducted in Vietnam so far.

In the Chapter 2, we were able to demonstrate, firstly, that the capability or multidimensional approach is a quite feasible solution for identifying the needs of poor people. However, deliberative participation is necessary for both the poverty dimensions and the capability approach. In deliberative participation processes, in rural areas of Vietnam, the needs' perception of the poor as they are identified not only lack of resources and basic infrastructure on which their livelihoods are dependent, but also more importantly they are in condition of knowledge and skill shortage which could help them improving the basic functioning to reduce poverty permanently. It is clear that the static set of core dimensions could not address the variable "poverty" solely, so it is necessary to follow a participatory – pluralist, interactive and multidimensional – process, associated with facilitation of poor people's own analysis. By this effort, the multi-dimensional and capability approach can be successful in identifying the actual needs of poor people. The aim of this process is to single out people's actual values and priorities through group discussions and participatory analyses. In addition, in a participatory process it may be possible to deepen the level of deliberative discussion, and examine values issues more directly than other methods. This approach proposed to look at direct policy process, poverty being then framed in terms of the absence of opportunities for participation in the political process shaping the institutional framework for poverty reduction.

Secondly, through examination of the Vietnam case, we could demonstrate that capability in Sen's theory is appropriate to integrate the needs' perception in which poverty is seen as the deprivation of some minimum fulfilment of elementary capabilities (in terms of capabilities, it is then the failure to meet basic needs of specified community bundles and primary goods (liberties,

freedom)). The needs' approach becomes providing poor people means of achieving certain basic functionings measured by the principal component analysis. Thus, there are good reasons for seeing poverty as deprivation of basic capabilities, rather than merely as low income. It is ultimately centred on addressing the poor people's deprivations in terms of "weak capability". The needs of poor people are concentrated on capacity development for taking opportunities and reducing vulnerabilities and ensuring equity for poverty reduction.

Thirdly, deliberative participation is essential, but there is a need of strategic criteria established for identifying the needs of poor people such as ensuring minimum livelihoods with basic income and commodities, basic resources, improving capability of the poor, social equity and justice, political freedoms. Equality is a basic criterion to set up to ensure equality in all spaces because of its effect on individual poor – it is among its manifold effects such as so-called "social exclusion" of poor groups and disadvantaged people.

In Vietnam, based upon the needs' perception of poor people in PPAs, they are not only lack of natural resources on which their livelihoods are very much dependent upon such as cultivated land, forest, water, but also they are weak in burden debt, shortage of capital, importantly they are lack of knowledge and technical skills which could help improving their basic functionings for fighting the poverty. The capability is the most important basic needs for poor people in urban area to improve their livelihoods. The capability of poor people is understood not just as independence of inside individual base, but also as the environment in which the poor live; therefore, the perception of poor people's needs covers various needs of improving basic infrastructure such as clinics, schools, roads, irrigation, dykes, markets, village centres, drainage system. Thus, Sen's theory is appropriate for needs perception of the poor in Vietnam: poverty is seen as the deprivation of some minimum fulfilment of elementary capabilities. However, from the diverse human needs and the multi-dimensions of poverty, there are different approaches to the needs of poor people to be constructed in setting up criteria which must be appropriate from theory and practice. There is a set of criteria established for identifying the needs of poor people in the case of Vietnam. Importantly, equality is the critical criterion to set up in all spaces of the needs. Its effect on the individual poor people is among its manifold effects such as so-called "social exclusion" of the poor and disadvantage people; even it may lead to loss of self-reliance, self-confidence and psychological and physical health.

How to measure the needs of poor people?

We set up this research question at an early stage (*see introduction pp. 4-5) because there are already some poverty measurements currently being applied in Vietnam such as household expenditure, poverty mapping, income base, local classification, self-assessment in participatory poverty assessment (PPA), wealth ranking, and human development index. However, there is no method to measure the capabilities of poor people. We explored how to measure the capabilities of poor people by the principal component analysis which was demonstrated in Chapter 3.

As a result of research, the data reduction technique has proven useful for the measurement of the capabilities of poor people. It allows identifying the small numbers of factors which represent the capabilities of poor people. The factors are: **Factor 1:** a number of items related to the general *social functionings*: there are abilities in establishing social networks (through social contact inside/outside the community), go to the market; maintaining relative family, participation/contribution in community action (be part of the community), establishment/maintenance of friendly relationship. **Factor 2:** is related to general *physical functionings* such as (i) abilities to move and perform normal functional activities; (ii) abilities to lead a healthy life or improving health status, building the strength and live in a good environment, even ability to use good nutrition such as fruit, vegetables or herbs,... (iii) abilities to read and write and communicate with all people related to real level of education; ability to speak in public without shame. **Factor 3:** is related to general *psychological functionings* on personal energy and ambition such as their feeling of sufficient confidence to contribute to the performance of the basic functionings, also to apply their knowledge in their life; also, their perceptions of happiness or pleasure, and belief in the future. This is closely related to achievable maximized utilities. **Factor 4:** is related to general *economic functionings* such as income in one period, saving, capital of abilities to invest into new micro-business; also abilities to satisfy their choices of commodity bundles as basic needs (food security, health, children education, transportation, entertainment...). And technical skills, new knowledge applied for earning income. Poor persons could be able to adopt a new technology to improve their life. **Factor 5:** is related to *political functionings* such as socialization, participation in public policy determinants, public policy ideas, public policy formulation, public policy decision-making, public policy implementation, public policy evaluation. Factor 5 also relates to abilities of persons to vote and select the best ones to be community leaders, abilities to be the community leader. **Factor 6:** the *ownership*, these functionings related to holding or possession or access in resources and assets such as production means, land, housing, clean water, irritable water, new technology.

Through the regression analysis, we have demonstrated that the basic functionings are explained by socio-economic characteristics of poor people as follows:

Firstly, although financial and materials assets endowments of households were dominant in the perception, sociological functioning and psychological functioning are importantly considered related to well-being of poor people. The social functionings has significant effect with most of socio-economic characteristics of poor people. These functionings could assist the poor having access to basic services as well as against the shocks or crisis or hardship. On social capital, these functionings provide more opportunities for poor people to improve their livelihoods. If the poor could not perform well these functionings, they are fallen the trap of “social exclusion”. This effect associates with other functionings and social characteristics.

Secondly, the physical functionings have significant effect to education, income level, and persons per family such as the level of education could decide their ability to overcome their poor

status. Also the physical functionings allow the poor to be aware of new opportunities to develop more productive and stable livelihoods. These functionings have significant effect to marital conditions such as without married status, the poor people face real difficulty of performing their full capability. Some basic functionings have correlations with the income characteristic of poor people. Thus, the limit of income makes poor people much weaker in terms of social functionings, economic functionings, even political functionings. The scale of household has a significant effect on social functionings, even politics. There is also a strong effect between gender relations and political functionings.

What are the elements and configurational institutions of participatory mechanism at grassroots level in Vietnam?

We established this research question because there are multiple levels in institutional analysis, analytically distinguishing three levels. As a first step, our effort focused on the operational level (grassroots level) (*see page 5). As a result of our research, we are able to formulate the conclusions here below.

In our models of multiple regression analysis, we can see that the level of the poor people's participation is mainly dependent on causal configurations of external factors rather than intrinsic values. The results of analyses indicated that the participation of poor households does not depend on the income and expenditure and capabilities of poor people (read or write), however, the cultural differences of ethnic minorities (norms) are significant to affect (negatively) to the poor participation. Building upon this conclusion from the empirical test, we could further elaborate with more qualitative analysis based on QCA approach, as outlined below.

Indeed the QCA analyses demonstrate that the participation of poor people in the needs' identification process is affected by a causal configuration of grassroots institutions. The outcome variables were set up to distinguish among different levels of participation by poor people in government and management decision at grass root level: "people know", "people discuss", "people implement", "people decide & supervise". The condition variables: DELPA (high level of deliberative participation) and VILEA (high importance of village leader) and MOs (strong mass organizations at the grass root level) are regularly important for three levels of participation such in information, discussion, and implementation denoted as the first cluster. There is "concurrent" combination of these conditions for three outcomes "people know", "people discuss" and "people implement". Note that we observed the same minimal configurations for two outcomes "people discuss" and "people implement". Based on case knowledge, we were able to confirm that these conditions (DELPA and VILEA and MOs) are causal conditions for both outcomes. Although the VILEA is the common condition for three outcomes "people know", "people discuss", "people implement", for the latter the poor people must discuss on their needs for ensuring their commitments and responsibilities. That is why, the deliberative participation is critically important in the poor peoples' needs identification.

One of our most important conclusions from the QCA analyses is that no single institution can hope to deal effectively with the different contexts and causes even though deliberative

participation (DELPA) is an important institution at grassroots level !“participation in the political processes shaping the institutional landscape”). The DELPA condition is confirmed an important condition for democratic governance in its own right, but even more for its contribution to the formation of a more fair and equal society. This can explain the effect of institutions through interests in designing them, social process of interaction, deliberation, and political debate. The DELPA is simply much dependent on the ability and willingness of local officials to undertake the tasks in a deliberative manner such as participatory planning, budget auditing, participatory monitoring, and to engage in processes of the poor people’s consultation. It closely links to public administrative reform (system reform), civil service reform and better recruitment for cadres in developing countries. The DELPA availability, the society-rooted politics play the key determinants; especially in the case of Vietnam they form and run the institutions at the grassroots participation. Finally, we could conclude that the configurations of three conditions (DELPA and VILEA and MOs) can be expected to establish the participatory – pluralist environment, interactive and multidimensional, associated with facilitation of poor people’s own analysis.

The configuration of DELPA and political institutions (MOs) help us understanding the process of translation from political action into institutional impacts and dynamic factors for changing. It means that all grassroots institutions which operate effectively to influence the poor participations on poverty reduction are supported by the CPV (the institutional centre). There is a contradiction that from the institutional interaction, elected bodies (PECO) at grassroots level are not effective to involve the participation of poor people even though PECO is supported by CPV. One single condition (PECO) does not seem to play such a central role in the explanation of either types of outcomes. It’s quite logical, since poor people themselves have little direct access to those People’s Councils. The people council does not play their representatives for poor people. This led us to conclude that the causal relation between institutional arrangements and substantive policy is complicated, indirect and contingent. It can be said that the policy distance is shorter from the poor people to the executive (administrative system) or CPV, so that the institutional arrangements need to take into account this point.

Some elements are more appropriate in connection to grassroots democracy, such as civil society, political institutions, and justice for poor peoples’ participation. By contrast to the three other outcomes discussed above, the final outcome “**DECID&SUPER**”, on the conceptual of political participation and Vietnam practices does not link to some important above elements (DELPA and VILEA and MOs). On the one hand, one even finds an opposite pattern : the combination of (DELPA and VILEA and MOs), which was the key favourable combination for the 3 other outcomes, proves to run against a higher level of poor people’s participation. On the other hand, the two conditions CDP and CSO play the key conditions for the fourth outcome. The core combination of these conditions does lead to the highest level of participation (**DECID&SUPER**). It means that the poor people need to possess their rules of game. When the CSO condition is strong, the poor people often participate in civil society organisations based

on the poor's volunteer manner so that they are empowered as much as possible to establish the rules of these organisations. The poor people then feel free to communicate and negotiate for rules of organisations or volunteer groups which made their needs fully responded – this is one of the most important aspects in their effective decision and control, through their participation.

To sum up: out of the 6 initial hypotheses (and 6 conditions constructed there from), two separate clusters could be validated. On the one hand, one favourable cluster (combination) of three conditions is more linked to the *institutional logics* (through the established authority system: village leaders, communist party organizations and formal deliberative mechanisms) and allows some *needs* of poor people to be taken into account – *but* at the same time this institutional logic does not empower fully the poor themselves: they are kept at the periphery, and therefore cannot *directly* have a say in the actual decision-making process. On the other hand, the only favourable combination of conditions which empowers the poor people lies at least partly outside of the institutionalized channels : when NGOs (and CSOs which are more independent at the local level; CSOs which are non political bases of the communities) provide a facilitating environment for the poor to actually participate – in particular through rights of complaints, denunciations and petitions. In other words: civil society organizations are a core factor enabling the poor people's voice to be heard. Thus, in the case of Vietnam, CSOs can play an important role, in conjunction with the strong state condition to promote the participation of poor people. This could happen of both the CSOs and the state authorities (through the CPV) follow a “concurrent objective” (the same goal) in institutional terms: the participatory mobilization of poor people, in particular to identify the needs of poor people.

How are institutional rules of the participating mechanisms established in the collective choice arena?

We set up this research question because rules at the grass roots situation were crafted in a collective choice situation which is itself structured by collective choice rules. Logically, if we want to establish the institutional framework (operational rules), we have to pay attention to the collective choice level where there is a struggle for institutionalization among different actors (*see introduction pages 6-7).

Most challenges of operational rules (for example: 6 condition variables) are established and configured at the collective choice level, and face effects of collective rules – so the challenge is to identify who are actors and how to select them, with information and cost/benefit analysis are the key factors affecting the interactions. Also, the operational rules have been institutionalized as “repertoire of collective choice”, rooted in political culture. This research question contributes much for the overall research question “how to establish the institutional framework of participatory mechanism for identifying the needs of poor people”.

By three terms: “top-down approach”, “bottom-up approach”, “in-between - individual poor people, organized poor and grassroots actors” in the light of model “Working Rules making in Collective Choice Situation” with some elements “pick-up” from three new institutionalisms, we have been able to conclude that the poor people become the key actor in the collective choice

which is important to ensure the responsiveness of institutions to their needs. If the institutional rules of participatory mechanisms are established by the non-poor (including individual and corporate actors), the key actor is the non-poor; certainly this has led in Vietnam to unresponsiveness of institutions to the needs of poor people. If the institutional rules are established by a mix of the non-poor and the poor, and if the key actor is still the non-poor, this has again led to the unresponsiveness of institutions to the needs of poor people. In contrast, if institutional rules are established by a mix of the non-poor and the poor, and if the key actor is poor people, this has led to responsiveness of institutions to their needs. The turning point can thus be summarized in the following conclusion: the poor need to be empowered fully to participate in the collective choice situation. In other words: they need to become key actors at the collective choice level to ensure the responsiveness of institutions to their needs.

To explain more accurately the operational rules crafted in collective choice level, the model “Working Rules making in Collective Choice Situation” represents the importance of the role of both exogenous and endogenous factors in institutionalizing operational rules in the collective choice arena as well as choice of conformance in collective settings. In our research, this model has proved its value added for policy analysts; assist helps bridge three theoretical strands of new institutionalisms. This allows generalizing both corporate actors and individual actors for multilevel analysis.

The case studies followed both a “top-down approach” and “bottom-up approach” “in between the individual poor, organized poor and grassroots actors” of Vietnam? They helped us to successfully test the model of rules making at the collective choice situation. This is more accurate than a single theory of new institutionalism in public policy and poverty studies, as in our institutional analysis we have “picked up” some relevant elements of three new institutionalisms. The possible outcomes were not perfectly generated by only formal rules in such a picture of state administrative system of the NTP-HEPR when the assumption failed in the focus of formal rule set of “top-down approach” or “bottom-up approach” and “working rules” in actors, as resulted from a combination rules and norms, strategies in the case of impact of PPAs for poverty reduction policies in Vietnam. These cases show that the working rules can be made in social historical perspectives, then by overtly examining how working rules affect each component and structure of institutional framework. A change in these rules is affected by a number of changes in rules of collective choice situation, thus the changing rules in collective choice arena as an interactive process and an evolution process though the actors do not quite equally contribute for institutionalizing new rules in the collective choice situation.

The rule enforcement and narratives of political leader’s command (human influence) are able to be permuted to generate the same outcome in the case of Vietnam – condition of “strong state” or “ruling party system” in which the hypothesis of spread discourse of local CPV leaders could significantly affect the collective choice situation. These two condition variables are equally important in the empirical test in Vietnam case. On the other hand, the incentives, capacity and

information sharing and historical perspective experience in participatory mechanism are critical components to co figure the coordination outcome.

The configuration of rules in collective choice situation with position rules given favour to national ownership which is more important to decide the impact of changing from the non-coordination of top-down approach to the participatory mechanism of bottom-up approach in policy making, especially for poverty reduction policies. The optimal participatory mechanism of new rules could be used to solve the cost of participation defined in condition of resource constraints.

In between – the “individual poor”, “organized poor” and “grassroots actors”, the cooperative behaviour is based on a part of social norms and social historical perspectives. The attempt of changing the extrinsic payoff structures may have been misdirected such as the sanctions and inducements can crowd out the formation of social norms or rooted constitutions that can enhance cooperative behaviour in their own way. Thus, increasing the authority of individuals to devise their own rules may well result in processes, specifically identifying the needs of poor people that allow social norms or social historical constitutions to evolve or continue and thereby increase the probability of participated individual poor, organized poor, coordinated grassroots actors actually solving their collective action problems.

3. Policy implications, in Vietnam and in other transition countries

a/ For Vietnam

In Vietnam, ordinary people’s everyday political behaviour can have a huge impact on national policy as Kerkvliet (2005) shows: the VN state eventually terminated the system, but not for ideological reasons. Rather, collectivization had become hopelessly compromised and was ultimately destroyed largely by the activities of villagers. De-collectivization began locally among villagers themselves; national policy merely followed. Besides, as a result of research, the policy implications will focus as much as possible on empowerment of the poor as the crucial requirement for a sustainable solution to poverty and hunger: “poverty as lack of power”, “the responsiveness of institutions”. In our research, we defined empowerment as the ability of people, in particular the least privileged, to: (1) have access to productive resources that enable them to increase their earnings and obtain the goods and services they need; and (2) participate in the development process and the decisions that affect them. Consequently, empowering the poor requires the removal of all institutional barriers that limit their choices and prevent them from taking action to improve their well-being; more particularly, empowering the poor includes strengthening the basic principles of good governance.

Unfortunately, from the findings of our research, we see that the results in Vietnam are not significant enough to ensure the high level of the poor people’s participation. To make sense, the empowerment means that the poor should be empowered to participate at the collective choice level with an equal position (to be key actor) to establish the institutional rules to ensure the

responsiveness of institutions to their needs at social, political and economic dimensions (*see the poor needs at pages 54-63). The institutional framework of participatory mechanisms for identifying the needs of poor people should be established in parallel with the empowerment process. The poor could be empowered in the condition of strong civil society organizations (see above; QCA analysis) that act as socio-political forces promoting and monitoring effective policies. Therefore, the policies should develop strong condition of civil society such as a key condition for empowerment – the establishment and strengthening of civil society organizations acting for and representing the interests of the poor and the hungry.

For Vietnamese people, also in the *Power of Everyday Politics* (reading Kerkvliet¹⁹, 2005 p.11), this outstanding feature has been taken into the policy implications at political system, state system, local government, and civil society development in the context of the reform process in Vietnam.

(i) *Political system and state administrative system*

Even with constraints due to mono power condition of “strong state” of Vietnam, the voice of the poor can be heard and there is responsiveness of institutions to the poor’s needs, provided strong institutional conditions are present at the local level (DELPA and VILEA and MOs). This setup is quite feasible to ensure three outcomes “people know”, “people discuss”, and “people implement” for Vietnam. These conditions are related to the executive system, and to political institutions defined in the research.

At present, it is not clear enough if political decentralisation only focuses on the division of decision making and planning power while the new development administration shifts the emphasis from bureaucratic-oriented to citizen-and-market-oriented services provision. It should be able to promote reform process toward supporting administrative/political decentralisation and civil society development. The idea is that democratic governance can trigger a virtuous cycle of development where political freedoms empower people to force the expansion of social and economic opportunities, thereby allowing communities to define their own priorities. This would be an enabling and regulating framework for local mass organisations (which are provided by central level) while empowering as much as possible the local mass organisations to work with the poor people. The decentralization may influence good governance in the public sector only if it:

- Is supported by necessary legal and administrative arrangements;
- Is accompanied by capacity building of local stakeholders;
- Includes adequate, predictable, and sustainable fundings (working facilities, information sharing, etc);

¹⁹ Kerkvliet, 2005. *The Power of Everyday Politics: How Vietnamese Peasants Transformed National Policy*. The Cornell University Press, pp. 10-12

- Is supported by an enabling and regulating framework for local government, which is provided by central government.

In such an effort, it also means: (i) reconciling the “strong state” principle with the separation of the three powers a modern state has (the Legislative, the Executive and the Judicial) which is commonly held for a state to remain democratic; (ii) re-building state “Rule of Law” in Vietnam. At collective choice level, in the reform component “institutional reform”, one should be able to create equal actors in a legally empowered process for establishing institutional rules which help re-conceptualising the State towards the good governance (see Grzymala-Busse and Jones Luong, 2002; Dimitrov et al, 2006).

(ii) *Local government (reform)*

One of the core results of our research, is the new concept that “participatory local institutional arrangements” (this being related to local government) can be implemented. Therefore, the political system of Vietnam need to be reformed in the following directions: (i) policies on local governments should foster democratic governance and better designing, financing, managing, supervising and monitoring local development measures and initiatives aimed at reducing poverty; policies, and provide them with adequate power and financial resources, while creating and/or consolidating a network of interactions with the organizations of civil society; (ii) supporting de-concentration of state administrations and political system, policies on democratic decentralization, widely considered a strategy of governance and a gradual process of reform addressing a range of administrative, political, fiscal, and land issues, should increase power and resources at a level of government that is closer, better understood and much easily influenced (than was previously the case) in order to enhance participation; (iii) in the reform process, the policies for changing the role of State should be toward more transparency and responsibility and accountability to ensure the effective of grassroots institutions. Although the elected body is legally a powerful organ in local level, it does not contribute for the poor people’s participation. This institution should be strengthened toward the empowerment of poor people, as there should be more poor people actively to participate into the communal people council to ensure that their needs are being responded to.

Besides, in order to ensure the effective poverty reduction policies, the participation of poor people should not based on the income and expenditure or on the poor people’s capability, though these may be criteria to identify who are the poor. Also, the poverty reduction policies should focus on the disadvantaged groups in Vietnam case : specifically ethnic minority people, female head of households, families of invalids, war-sick, veterans, martyrs, Vietnamese heroic mothers, families of lonely elderly, and disabled who need to receive regular social subsidy, all classified as a poor or very poor household by the commune authorities. The policy process should be complemented with deliberative participation to ensure a better fulfilment of the individual needs of the poor – this deliberative participation should be ensured not only for policy planning, but also for policy implementation and policy evaluation. In general, the

disadvantaged groups are identified by the community itself, in a better way than any technical criteria set up.

(iii) CSO development

In spite of recent transformations in the country, the civil society sector in Vietnam is still rather weak. In fact, it has been operating in a slightly disabling environment. However, the values dimension of civil society is the strongest and the impact dimension is the weakest dimension. Also, a result of Chapter 3, CSOs (which are more independent at the local level; and which are the non-political bases of the communities) provide a crucial facilitating environment for the poor to actually participate – in particular through rights of complaints, denunciations and petitions. Civil society development does not mean to weaken the state institutions, but rather to enhance the “strong state” so that it can better promote social inclusion and political participation. Some more detailed implications are discussed below.

Considering the story of the weakened condition of PECO, the free elections cannot, by themselves, create a democratic society. What is needed is a comprehensive reform of state institutions. In order to be effective, this reform should be accompanied by efforts to sustain civil society. Thus, turning to civil society assistance is a way of stimulating external pressures for policy and institutional reform.

An active ‘civic community’ and democratic values (norms and networks) are preconditions for a good local government. Concurrently, a functionally-decentralized good government allows the emergence of a dynamic civil society. Decentralization should accompany efforts intended to strengthen the range of institutions of civil society.

Civil society networks also facilitate local governance by helping to mobilize additional resources, by enhancing the accountability of local level political and management officials and by creating synergies leading to innovations and higher levels of productivity. The focus on civil society is also likely to promote gender-sensitive local development.

Informal institutions could, under certain conditions, be an effective route to reach the poor. It is also true however that, by emerging only when formal institutions fail to perform, informal institutions do not provide sustainability.

Of course, the core practical question, which could prolong our current research (path for further research), is: how to best build bridges between, and networks among, existing formal and informal institutions as a means of enhancing the success of formal institutions and empowering poor people to participate at the collective choice level to take advantage of social service delivery structures and market opportunities?

(iv) for development projects

The development intervention should be targeted, so as to strengthen three institutional logics (DELPA and VILEA and MOs) to ensure the implementation of grassroots democracy. Also,

the poor people should be empowered to participate into the establishment of project policies, so as to ensure that their needs are responded to. These projects could play an important role, so that local government policy could target poverty reduction as well as and grassroots democracy and justice.

b/ Generalization to other transition countries

Beyond the case of Vietnam, we should discuss the generalizability of some of our core findings. Naturally, we should take into account the specificity of Vietnam as a “strong state” under mono power – thus it does not resemble so many countries in the developing world. However, what Vietnam could share with other countries is the status of “transition country”: countries which were characterized by central planning, public ownership, and the principle of labour-based distribution, and which are currently moving away from a state socialist system. Indeed the Vietnamese political system, during the reform period, has become more inclusive. Similarly with other transition countries, it has been facing difficulties in institutions and policy making, poverty and hunger. Therefore, the transition countries could pick up some elements of our model of “institutional rules at the collective choice level”, especially the empowerment of poor people in establishing the institutional framework of poverty reduction. It is also recognised that simultaneously there are two institutional frameworks, the first is for the reform or renovation, the second is for poverty reduction or sector or multi-sector development such as health care, education, poverty reduction, environment protection, pollution control etc.

In order to ensure the highest level and quality of the poor people’s participation, one should be able to develop and strengthen both the civil society sector and justice in these transition countries. The highest participation could implement the saying “serve the interests of the people, rely on the people and be responsive to new ideas of people”; the transition countries could develop the civil society so that everyone can voice and propagate their interests.

c/ Generalization to other developing countries

As outlined right above, the case of Vietnam as “strong state” under mono power does not seem appropriate for most of other developing countries in the world. However, from Appendix 16 & 17, we can see that Vietnam case could share some dimensions with developing countries, especially in terms of poverty and equality. In the two periods: 1981-1993; and 1993-2004, the poverty rate of Vietnam was dramatically reduced in comparison to the selected countries, while the GINI showed no change in these periods. The average income of Vietnam is always higher than that of the selected countries. Vietnam also has high political stability and rather effective government, but it has weak voice and accountability.

Within the framework of this (country-specific) research, we could not exploit fully those first research results stemming from the evidence in Appendix 16 & 17, but we could select some elements important for developing countries where poverty is endemic and spreading. Firstly, the

cultural differences of ethnic minorities (norms) are often significant to affect the poor people's participation. So a first recommendation would be to pay more attention to communal norms for different cultures of ethnic minorities. Secondly, from the causal configuration of grassroots institutions of the poor people's participation in Vietnam, we could see that DELPA (high level of deliberative participation) and VILEA (high importance of village leader) and MOs (strong mass organizations at the grass root level) are regularly important for three levels of participation such in information, discussion, and implementation. This could be possible in terms of advocacy for developing countries because (a) the condition DELPA is more linked to the *institutional logics* (through the established authority system) which one could recommend to strengthen in developing countries more generally ("state-building"); (b) the VILEA (village leaders) is quite natural different from country to country by rooted social political causes; but however, considering the very rich cultural ethnic minorities in selected communes help us make a strong argument that if there is universal suffrage of free election by villagers to produce VILEA (village leaders), it could bring about the same favourable effect in other developing countries.

Moreover, this institutional logic does not empower the poor themselves in the single case of Vietnam. They are often kept bounded at the political periphery, and therefore the poor cannot *directly* have fully actual access to the decision-making process. In Vietnam, even in "strong state condition" and "mono power system", CSOs (civil society) could help empowering the poor to provide a facilitating environment for the poor to actually participate – in particular through rights of complaints, denunciations and petitions. For most developing countries having "weak state", "fragmented power", we also make a strong argument that CSOs could have stronger effects than Vietnam case. So for other developing countries, one should be able to establish and develop a strong condition of civil society which is really a core factor enabling the poor people's voice to be heard.

Finally, it is important to note that, as in the Vietnam case, the poor people should participate at the collective choice level to establish the institutional rules (especially participatory local institutional arrangements) to ensure the responsiveness of institutions to their needs. The DELPA is the most important institution, therefore, a priority should be given for the poor people's participation in collective choice situation, through the establishment of such institutional rules (adapted to each country-specific cultural and historical context, of course).

4. Further research

4.1/ Core limitations of the research

Probably the one major limitation of our research is that it is carried out for the single case of Vietnam, which is highly specific in some ways ("strong state" condition with mono power constraints), and therefore it is difficult to generalize. However, we were able to consolidate the research by perform *within-national* comparison, and by relying on detailed knowledge at the local level. Taking this limitation into account, helps us reflect on further paths for research.

4.2/ Further research paths, to address these limitations?

a/ Cross-country analysis

We would suggest a broader comparative analysis – at the local level toward the relationships between poverty, justice and democracy. The research has been done around the strong point of the analysis: focusing at the local level to go beyond “too simple” analysis at the national macro-level. In a next step, we could expand this design in a cross-country way – including VN (and exploiting the theoretical models, particular configurations of grassroots institutions, model of institutional rules at collective choice level etc.) and some other selected developing countries. For example, we could use Appendix 18 & 19 to select some 11 developing countries in the world. Examining these countries, a cross-country (and cross-local) comparative analysis could bring much more powerful achievements.

b/ Stronger and more complex models (also including contextual variables)

How to develop the optimal model of participatory mechanism with multi-optimized constraints? The difficulty lies in the fact that, in “real life”, there are more constraints such as capacity, experience, information sharing system, incentives, etc. (in the practical case of Vietnam, for instance). Thus, the (local) case pictures require further work to explain why some contextual variables enhance coordination while others discourage it.

c/ Choice of methods/ technique

(i) Flexible approach: the QCA approach has proven very useful for studying institutions. As a result of our research, we have demonstrated that QCA is powerful for institutional analysis at the operational level. Also, QCA must be a very useful tool for studying the capabilities of poor people because it is strong in studying case characteristics, exploring the connections between combinations of causally relevant conditions and outcomes, especially overlapping inequalities, and providing clues to identify complex patterns of causality (causal diversity).

(ii) Keep combination of methodologies: Through our research, we found out that quantitative methods could give us some important insights about the size and scope of phenomena and about the linkages among variables, but quantitative methods are often very limited (or even inapt) in explaining the causal mechanism. The qualitative methods helped us to fill in this dark corner, but they lead to worries about the possibility that we have simply stumbled across an idiosyncratic causal path. Gladly, the QCA could overcome much the gap between the two methodologies – by bringing some systematization in the comparison of (qualitatively) different local cases. However, further research could be more powerful to combine QCA with other methods to exploit both strengths, like the way we have begun to do by combining QCA and regression analysis. Last and not least, QCA has a high potential in institutional research in

combination with the IAD framework (by Ostrom), because it combines the static and dynamic approaches -- , so it is possible to continue with more empirical research.

(iii) Keep “qualitative” knowledge (local communities, communes), and case-based knowledge:

This research shows that qualitative knowledge plays a key role in the development of an institutional framework, particularly for poverty reduction or related sectoral development. However, most existing research programs pay much attention to national and macro level evidence. Consequently, such research results are poor in terms of policy implications and effective policy advocacy (especially if the actors operate at multiple levels). This provides another strong justification, for next steps of research, to establish the comparative analysis at the level of local communities [communes] for cross countries (or possibly at the regional level), also relying on in-depth, qualitative, “on-the –ground” expertise by both academic researchers and the stakeholders themselves./.

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