

Empowering and Developing The Local Potency Through Thematic Village in Semarang

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Abstract—Thematic village, in which the community actively involved in developing the local potency, is a solution to address the poverty as the main problems of the society who needs environmental improvement and settlement infrastructure. The study aims to examine the implementation of the thematic village in Semarang. Generally, thematic village program has been succeeded in empowering the community, socially, economically, and maintaining the local potency through community participation. The factor that makes the program need to be improved is the planning concept of thematic village, its application, the theme and local potency that are not synchronized, and also the lack of community participation in creating village identity.

Keywords—Community empowerment, Local potency, thematic villages

I. INTRODUCTION

The term "village" is familiar to Indonesians. In fact, sometimes the terms *kampung* and *desa* are used interchangeably that both villages terms have the same meaning as the smallest administrative unit in a certain area, under the sub-district. In Java particularly, the term *kampung* is intended for areas that generally located in the district out of town. The term *kampung*, now has changed to show certain identity of a region. While the term *kelurahan* (sub-district) refers to the urban area.

Thematic Village is one of the innovations of Semarang Government to overcome the basic needs fulfilment problem, especially on environmental quality of the housing for the poor and basic infrastructure. The implementation of the thematic village concept began in 2016 and became the starting point of environment improvement and also community empowerment in order to overcome poverty problems in Semarang. Village is a place for a community that lives in a particular area (can be a group of *RT* or *RW*) under *kelurahan* or *kecamatan* (sub-district). Thematic is a theme or conception that shows identity or specific meaning as an expression which wants to convey by the community related to the social or economic potency on each village. Thematic village is an area under the administration of the village or district

which shows the identity of the community based on its social or economic potency to expose and highlighted as the results of community agreement [1].

In developing Thematic Villages, there are several considerations. Those are changing the slums to be better, increasing the green area, actively involved the community participation, and raising the social and economic potency of the local community (empowerment). If in 2016, there were 32 thematic villages, then in 2017, it increased to 80 villages, and by the end of 2018, it will be villages.

II. THE CONCEPT OF THEMATIC VILLAGES

The concept of thematic village according to [2] is more on offering the community to be proactively involved, so that it is not only community-based but also the creation of a distinctively sustainable village space by the community. Born from the creative ideas of the community and the community itself, thematic villages can also be called a social innovation [3]. The implementation of the thematic village concept based on social innovation schemes has three stages: First, mapping the problems faced by the community to seek ideas together in developing their villages and also to create jobs and to increase the participation of local communities; second, determining a theme of the village by finding a group of people who is interested to cooperate in implementing the idea or theme in his village; third, coordinating through ideas or themes that are then modified by the various actors involved and finally implemented in practice on its territory. Moreover, [4] divided the planning stage into 6 stages, those are: agenda setting, policy formulation, policy implementation, policy evaluation, policy change, and policy termination.

The development of thematic villages is influenced by several factors such as economic, social characteristics, local potency that can be raised as themes, financial support from outside parties, initiatives from community leaders, and initiatives from the community. According to [5], a concept of developing a region, such as a thematic

village, can achieve a positive thing if the community can participate and see the positive impact, potency increase to possible income that can be generated. A study conducted by [3] showed that successful thematic villages are villages that involved community groups to be able to implement themes that are appropriate to their villages. On the contrary, thematic villages were unsuccessful if community was lack in participation and on the implementation of the theme. Hence, the theme could not embody or if it was abandoned.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Thematic Villages in Semarang

Bappeda (Development Planning Agency at Sub-National Level) in Semarang in 2015 noted that 114.939 families / 367.848 people or approximately 20% of 1.767.086 citizens are living in poverty. The Thematic Village program is one of the best poverty eradications that makes people not only as the object, but it also actively participated in poverty and slum eradication program in Semarang. The aims of thematic village program are: 1) improving welfare through the local economy improvement, 2) changing the slum area into a well-organized area (through environmental improvements), 3) involving the community to participate in poverty eradication programs, 4) increasing the social and economics' of local potency, 5) increasing community awareness and creating the village identity to improve the community empowerment.

The purposes of the establishment of Thematic Villages are: 1) decreasing poverty and unemployment, 2) improving slum environment, 3) raising local wisdom by managing its potency and solving the environmental problems, and 4) being tourist destinations.

The aims of the Thematic Village are as follows: 1) establishing of thematic villages based on community and environmental improvement, 2) educating the community to understand their region characteristics, 3) the community would know their area potentiality and problems, 4) identifying potential and environmental problems of families and the poor, 5) keeping the community spirit to develop themselves and their territory.

Through this program, the government is expected the following results: 1) to build the community personality to care of their environment, 2) to raise the community welfare through the social or economic potency, and 3) to raise the environment quality to be better and well-organized.

B. Community Empowerment in Thematic Village

Community empowerment is an effort to improve the dignity of society level which is unable to escape the poverty trap and underdevelopment [6]. Community empowerment itself requires a process. The notion of empowerment as a "process" refers to a series of actions or steps taken in a systematic chronological manner that reflects the stages to change the powerless side towards empowerment [7].

One of the Thematic villages that succeeds in empowering their community and raising the local potency is *Kampung Pelangi* that can be seen from the following indicators.

First, alleviate poverty and the jobless citizen are by utilizing the area as a tourist destination and where be able to become a new source of income for the community is. Second, it is by improving the slum area. *Kampung Pelangi* is known as *Kampung Wonosari* which previously is a slum area and densely populated. *Kampung Pelangi* is a representative of the slum metamorphosis, a village as a tourist destination, even though at first, it was not included in Thematic village policy planning because not all citizen includes in a poor category. Third, it is exposing the local wisdom in managing and solving the environment problem. The uniqueness of the village is the topography that is terracing and close to the heart of the town. The Semarang Government synergizes with the Indonesian Employers' Association (*Gapensi*) and the Tourism Awareness Group (*Pokdarwis*) to optimize the entire environmental potency and empower local people.

The community is invited to identify the potency and problems of the residential environment then formulate the handling of problems in community welfare. Initiatives from Semarang government were welcomed by most people. It can be seen from community participation starting from the planning stage to the endorsement of *Kampung Pelangi* on April 15, 2017. The houses that are behind Semarang River, with the assistance from the Semarang Regional Budget (APBD), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), and community participation are now present as one of the tourist destinations in the Semarang. In addition to beautify slum area, the program managed to build proper houses, sanitation, repair the river banks, clean the river, and form a Tourism Awareness Group (*Pokdarwis*) which included the local community members [8]. This phenomenon shows the success of the village community to change the image of their own village. This becomes Semarang government consideration to granting land certificates on 23 December 2017, for the land that their occupied was the state land.

However, the establishment thematic villages in Semarang faced another problem. The continuity and sustainability of the thematic villages are challenged. Unfortunately, not all thematic villages could continue for long time. Many of them only last less than a year. For example, Hydroponic Village in Tanjung Mas Village, Semarang, which can only last for five months.

It has been analyzed that several factors hinder thematic villages to sustain their identity. First, the planning concept of the Thematic Village is weak because of the inconsistency of the program with the social, economic and infrastructure conditions on the area. Second, it is highly depended on the local government in the technical implementation process. The community is very dependent on the local government in determining the theme, so the role of local government is dominant. Third, the theme of village is not based on the local potency. This is caused by the lack of community ability to identify the icon potentiality. The fourth one is the lack

of community awareness in creating the village identity to develop their spirit towards the regional development vision in Semarang in 2016-2021.

IV. CONCLUSION

Thematic Village is a program that promotes the local potency by addressing problems that can give meaning to a place or a region and community activities. The thematic village approach is a condition that brings together several potentials or problems and integrated solutions that can give meaning and can be realized in everyday life with an emphasis on empowerment and sustainability.

Thematic features of the village are namely: 1) the existence of a main theme that describes the social or economic potential of the community, 2) gives a certain meaning in the life of the community, and 3) can be developed for sustainable development. Thematic village formation can run optimally, if it can educate the community to be able to understand the characteristics of the region, including mapping and identifying the potential and problems of neighborhoods and poor residents, as well as raising the spirit of the community in building themselves and their territory.

However, there is a factor that could cause unsustainability of the program. The lack of planning of the Thematic Village concept, the technical process of implementation, the incompatibility of the theme with the potential of the village, and the lack of community awareness in shaping the identity of the village are some

of the challenges need to address in order to guarantee the sustainability and continuity of thematic village programs in Semarang.

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