

# The Dynamics of Strengthening Socio-Economic Capacity of Rural Community Through Thematic Kampong in Semarang

Hartati Sulistyori Rini

Faculty of Social Sciences, Universitas Negeri Semarang  
Semarang, Indonesia

Corresponding email: hartatisulistyori@mail.unnes.ac.id

**Abstract**— The development of rural communities has become a central issue developing lately. Various policies both at the national and local levels surfaced and placed the village's socio-economic strengthening as the top priority of development. One policy that has implications for the socio-economic dynamics of the community is the thematic kampong program in Semarang city, especially the Malon natural kampong. The purpose of this study was to find out: 1) the implementation of the Semarang natural thematic kampong program along with the problems and challenges faced; and 2) strengthening the socio-economic capacity of the community through Semarang's natural thematic kampong program. The research method used is qualitative descriptive with data retrieval techniques using observation, interviews, and documentation. Data validity uses triangulation, and data analysis is guided by interactive data analysis. The results of this study indicate that the community managed to identify the local potential that they have to develop in the thematic kampong program. The implementation of the Malon natural thematic kampong program is realized in the community resource-based Edu-tourism package, which combines agriculture, livestock, culinary, and the practice of making batik with natural dyes. The problems and challenges of implementing thematic kampong are also faced by the community, concerning institutional and operational aspects. Through this thematic kampong program, there has been a strengthening of community capacity regarding infrastructure aspects, economic aspects of the community, social aspects of society, social networks with relevant stakeholders, even on the attitudes of the community in facing the problems and challenges in the thematic village program.

**Keywords**— rural community, strengthened capacity, socio-economy aspect, thematic kampong

## I. INTRODUCTION

Thematic kampong has become a popular program of the Semarang City Government since 2016. The legal basis of this program is the Presidential Regulation on Acceleration of Poverty Reduction in 2010 and is revealed to the Decree of the Mayor of Semarang. The

development of this thematic kampong then relies on the utilization of community potential and the strengthening of community capacity with a bottom up model.

Empowerment issues are central to this study given that the thematic village program is expected to become a sustainable community socio-economic strengthening program. Empowerment is defined as a group's or individual's capacity to make effective choices, that is, to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes [1]. So far, many potentials of local communities, especially in rural areas, have not been utilized for the welfare of the community therein. The effort to manage local potential is still constrained by issues of management effectiveness that is not fully transparent and accountable yet [2]. As a consequence,, rural communities are attached to poverty. Based on BPS data, [3] seen from the 2009-2017 poverty level, poverty in rural areas is higher than in urban areas. In September 2017, poverty in rural areas was 13.47 % or in absolute terms 16.31 million people, while in urban areas it was 7.26 % or in absolute terms 10.27 million people.

The synergy between local potential management and the community in it is expected to be an icon for change and strengthening community capacity in the social and economic fields. According to the government [4], the local potential possessed in the community can be in the form of: a) dominant community businesses and the main livelihood of most residents in the region; b). Society's educating character (culture, tradition, local wisdom); c). community and healthy environment; d). environmentally friendly home industry; e). Crafting the community; and f). local characteristics that are stronger / not owned by other villages and can become regional icons. In the context of budgeting, the Semarang city government provides funds for each kampong of IDR 200,000,000 per year since 2016.

One pilot project area of the Thematic Kampong Program in Semarang since 2016 is Kampung Malon in Gunungpati. This area is known as a place which has several advantages in the use of natural resources, so it is

called the Malon Natural Village (Kampung Alam Malon). This program has become an important breakthrough for the city of Semarang which is expected to be a trigger effect for institutional strengthening and improvement of the socio-economic welfare of the community. However, the characteristics of agricultural communities that are converted into the context of the tourism industry must also be taken seriously. Individual and institutional challenges become issues that cannot be underestimated. Therefore, there are two main problems discussed in this study : 1) the implementation of the Semarang natural thematic kampong program along with the problems and challenges faced: and 2) strengthening the socio-economic capacity of the community through Semarang's natural thematic kampong program.

## II. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach, specific to the case studies in the Kampung Alam Malon Semarang. Observations were carried out in shops and workshops of natural batik, garden of coloring plants (plants to make natural dyes), meeting places and other supporting facilities. Interviews were conducted with batik business owners, and community groups who were involved and not directly involved in this program. Data analysis techniques uses interactive models.

## III. KAMPONG ALAM MALON (THE MALON NATURE VILLAGE) IN SEMARANG

Semarang has diverse geographical contours of coastal, plateau and mountains. The Malon nature village is located in the Gunungpati area, with a location of approximately 300 meters above sea level or occupying a mountainous area. The total population of Kampung Malon is 376 people, consisting of 155 families, 1 RW (Citizens Association) with 3 RTs (Neighborhood Association). The villagers' livelihoods are focused on agriculture (food and non-food crops), fruit plantation (durian, longan, avocado, etc.), and cattle farming.

In the next development, the small-scaled industry sector emerged which colored the dynamics of the people in Malon, namely the center of batik Zie. Marheno Jayanto and his wife Zazilah, are the owners of Zie batik which is also the motor behind the development of this sector. These two people provide training program to local residents to have the ability of making batik so that these skills can be developed and made a livelihood to increase community income. The training was held at the home of the batik owner, as well as part of the production and workshops of the residents.

Malon Natural Batik has a unique characteristics because it uses natural dyes that are environmentally friendly, such as those obtained from indigo plants, mimosa, mahogany, areca nut, jelawe, turmeric, secang, rambutan peel, mangosteen peel, lute, mango leaves, avocado, noni, and mangrove fruit. The kind of colors

that produced from this natural material are reddish purple produced from mangosteen peel, brown and black can even be produced from dried mangroves, and blue color comes from indigo or *indigofera tinctoria* or called tom in Javanese. The indigo plant as a natural coloring material for batik is the characteristic of this village. Based on the territorial potential possessed by the Malon Nature Village, several programs were made related to this thematic kampong, including strengthening: aspects of infrastructure, the economic aspects, social aspects, and social networks of the community.

## IV. PREPARING INFRASTRUCTURES

Physically, there are several facilities that support the activities of the thematic kampong, such as: batik facilities, agricultural equipment and livestock, arts facilities, cultivation of *indigofera* plants, installation of Wi-Fi, and provision of homestays.

Batik, both hand-drawn batik and stamped batik, is marked by the availability of batik tools and equipments,. Some of the tools are *canting* (a tool to dye clothes), frying pans, small stoves, and *gawangan* (to put cloth while painted). For printed batik, there are various printing motifs that can be found in the workshop. Adequate facilities is expected to facilitate the process of batik making, both for production and for tourist visits. The time spent to complete batik making process is different between the natural dye batik and chemical dye batik. To make the natural color batik takes approximately 1-3 months for each sheet, which is far longer than chemical dyes which only takes a week. The choice of raw material itself, takes 3 hours per color to be ready to be used as a batik dye.

The equipment for farming and livestock are also available. Some tractors are used to strengthen rural farming practices. To facilitate the aspect of animal husbandry, mechanical equipment has been provided to milk cows, so that they are no longer in traditional ways.

Art facilities are also available in this village, namely Padepokan Ilir-Ilir. This building is in the form of a hall that can be used for art performances, gatherings and religious activities. Here, this building is also equipped with gamelan, table chairs, even some traditional games such as stilts.

The cultivation of *indigofera tinctoria* plants is also carried out in this village. Not far from Zie batik, there are typical coloring plant gardens used for Malon batik. The leaves are washed and soaked in water for 48 hours, then followed by the fermentation process and the addition of lime for the oxidation process.

Wi-Fi installation was also set up in this kampong. In a case, the installation of Wi-Fi is very useful, including to support the process of transactions with non-cash systems. From some experiences, many batik buyers prefer to have transactions with non-cash or transfer because of the high price of natural batik which ranges from 250,000-15,000,000. It will be very difficult if consumers paid with cash method. The package of edu-

tourism also offer visitors to stay overnight, and some homestays are available at affordable prices. These homestay are usually provided by community leaders. Different aspects of infrastructure and recreational facilities can be considered as elements of tourism infrastructure that focus more on providing preconditions for development, while recreational facilities are seen as a way to improve everyday life [5].

#### V. INCREASING RURAL ECONOMIC LEVEL

In this aspect, there are several important findings, one of which is the realization of educational tourism packages and their impact on the welfare of citizens. The educational tour package developed in the Malon Nature Village consists of batik tours, color garden of coloring plant, traditional games, dairy farms, fruit gardens, and traditional culinary. With batik tourism, visitors are invited to see the process and the practice of batik making. In this activity, tourists also recognize various natural dyes and their manufacturing processes. There are 3 types of batik sold here : hand-drawn batik (batik tulis), stamped batik, and screen batik (mixture of hand-drawn and stamped). Stamped batik is sold at a price of IDR 250,000 until IDR 15,000,000 ,while screen batik is valued at IDR 600,000 until IDR 15,000,000 ,and hand-drawn batik is valued at IDR 1,500,000 until IDR 15,000,000. Fig. 1. shows the products of batik with natural dyes.



Figure 1. Batik with natural dyes

Natural coloring plants gardens are also an integral part of this batik tour. It is a garden planted with various types of plants that will be processed into natural dyes. The uniqueness of this natural coloring plants garden is the cultivation of indigofera tinctoria plants, which is processed into blue indigo natural dyes. Traditional games can also be tried here, for example stilts (*egrang*).

For fruit enthusiasts, Malon nature kampong also provides several fruit variants that can be eaten directly according to the season. There are 7 hectares of fruit land available, which contain various fruit commodities such as longan, avocado, orange, durian and food crops such as beans and cassava. Especially for durian, in this village there is a unique type of Monti (Montong Gunungpati)

durian, and also several other types of local durian. Besides, visitors can also directly experience the process of feeding cattle or trying to milking the cattle. Traditional culinary packages are also provided in Malon kampong with the typical foods are Wedang Malon, Krembis Satay and Barokah Coffee Kampung Alam Malon. This tour package provides space for tourists to learn about the social life, art and culture of the local community. The high selling value of this tourist village is not the product, but the daily activities of the people that are considered unique by tourists. [6]As a tourist village, they offer traditional villages to show their culture, custom, and heritage.

#### VI. IMPROVING SOCIAL CAPACITY

Several aspects of social capacity in the community are : strengthening skills and community response, and the emergence of community groups that focus on developing the potential of local villages. Training and mentoring such as batik training, art training, and health checks for batik artisans are important. Strengthening social aspects was also marked by batik training which was still continuously carried out by Zie batik owners, as well as the government. The training is related to basic batik skills, and also the development of batik motifs to become more dynamic. Batik motifs developed are not only in the form of plant and animal ornaments, but also legendary motifs such as Mahabarata, Jaka Tarub, Pragulopati and others. Training in the arts, especially *jathilan* dance is also carried out. This can be used to welcome guests. The preparation of the physical and non-physical infrastructure, a comprehensive understanding of the tourism products and services are the critical early steps in tourism development [7].

As the most attractive tourism commodity of the Malon nature kampong, the batik making activity is supported by several batik groups. Now, there are four groups of batik with 10 members each, namely the Mangosteen, Crystal, Citra and Delima groups. Usually, 1-2 members who has been expert in batik will be taken to become an employee at Zie Batik. Those who have become permanent employees at Zie Batik do not forget their group origin by continuing to teach their batik making abilities. The batik sales of these groups do not reach high income to help the community economy yet, because the batik is still relatively new and has lower quality compared to Zie Batik. However, Zie batik continues to open networks with these batik groups by inviting cooperation. The trick is when there are orders, these batik groups are given a portion to work on, with the note that those who work are people who are good at making batik. The goal is to get experience so that it can be shared when returning to the group. This system is done alternately so that the capacity of each batik maker increases.

For the breeders group, there are 16 members. Cow becomes animal commodity in Malon nature kampong.



There are two different cows used here : dairy cows and beef cattle. For beef cattle, farmers can enjoy the results every three or six months. In addition, at the time of the festivities such as Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr, these farmers can sell their livestock more than normal days. For dairy cows, they use the results of this dairy cattle into milk that is ready for consumption. Usually these farmers milk their cows in the morning and evening. After milking, they sell it to collectors who will sell it to the people in the city of Semarang. If anyone wants to buy milk (other than collectors) in this cattle rancher, they must order it first, for example for visiting tourists. In addition to being sold to collectors, the dairy farmers also sell their milk to KUD Mekarsari in Salatiga with a higher price as consequences. All of these activities are formulated in such a way that generate and enhance their individual and collective capabilities thus promoting sustainable human development in their communities [8]. At the community level, the activities refer to a collective empowerment action to improve the quality of life in a community and to the connections among community organizations [9].

#### VII. COOPERATION AND NETWORKING AS SUPPORTING SYSTEM

The social network is intertwined between Malon nature village with Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES), Indonesia Power, Department of Industry and Commerce of Semarang City tourism service, Department of Industry and Commerce of Semarang city, and Semarang City government. The involvement of various parties was able to strengthen the implementation of this thematic village. Cooperation is one of the ways to react and productively work in the modern environment with increasingly complicated and unpredictable fast changes [10].

The tools for stamped batik have been provided for batik groups by Indonesia Power and Disperindag (Department of Industry and Commerce). Each batik group gets a stamp with different motives for attractiveness and added value. To improve the ability and quality in batik, there are certifications carried out by several institutions such as Disperindag, Bekraf, and Indonesia Power. Certification is done starting from certification of stamping ability, slam ability, and so on. Batik training also got support from the Department of Culture and Tourism. UNNES as a higher education institution also paid attention to strengthening the implementation of the Malon nature thematic village with several things, namely: mentoring from UNNES research and service institution, health checks for batik makers, strengthening jathilan arts, developing batik training, giving indigofera tinctoria seeds, facilitating feasibility test of indigo natural dyes, as well as the procurement of chickens as livestock products for kampong. The Village also cooperates with the City Government and Local Government (Regional Government) regarding the use of

4 hectares of government-owned agricultural land. The government is also trying to provide capital loans to batik artisans, but these batik groups do not want to accept because they are anxious of not being able to repay.

#### VIII. THE PROBLEMS OF SOCIO-ECONOMICS TRANSFORMATIONS

The problems faced were so far related to the management and development of thematic kampong, such as : the lack of batik sales optimalization between Zie small-scale industry and community-groups, social distance and competition among thematic kampong actors, the need of batik showrooms, and the limited capability of foreign languages. The sales of natural batik of the batik community-groups are still experiencing problems related to the quality that is still under the quality of Zie batik, and also the limited marketing. During this time the products were purchased by government officials to cover group saving. For marketing, the Semarang City Tourism Office along with Indonesian and Malaysian bloggers-vloggers have made a visit to the Malon nature kampong to explore online sales assistance for batik groups. The batik Zie itself already has a website that supports their publication, while for the batik group, there are only Delima batik group that has a blog.

The social distance and arising of competition appear due to changes in people's behavior and interaction with the incessant program of this thematic kampong. They all want to show superiorly and start leaving mutual cooperation, harmony and caring for one another. According to Coser [11] these conflicts are related to the establishment, maintenance, and reaffirmation of group identity in a society. This is based on the economic disparity between the income of Zie batik and batik groups. Mediation was also opened involving community leaders.

All the physical facilities are available in this kampong, except the Gallery. The problem is not about the funds, but a location where the gallery will be built that cannot be decided yet. While in terms of capacity building, the community does not have foreign language skills. The importance of foreign languages such as English and Mandarin is very necessary, because the international market has begun to open with the arrival of foreign tourists from Hong Kong, Bangkok, Taiwan and Timor Leste.

#### IX. FUTURE CHALLENGES

The challenges of implementing thematic kampong in the future also began to be identified. This is related to the future self-reliance of people in carrying out activities in thematic kampong because until this time the government and various parties provide support both for the fulfillment of physical and non-physical facilities. Secondly, there are concerns when capital owners offer to

invest their capital in the batik business and replace natural dyes with synthetic dyes. This is of course will eliminate the characteristic of Malon Natural kampung batik which comes from the natural dyes.

**X. STRENGTHENED CAPACITY BASED ON EMPOWERMENT OF LOCAL RESOURCES**

With the results of the research, it can be said that the socio-economic processes occurred in the context of the thematic kampung have entered the context of strengthening community capacity. The development of rural tourism in the country will promote economic growth in the regions, ensure employment of local people, and improve their well-being [12]. Some steps toward this level of capacity strengthening can be seen as follows: finding local potential, community empowerment processes, strengthening the capacity of the community. Fig. 2. is a chart to illustrate these processes :

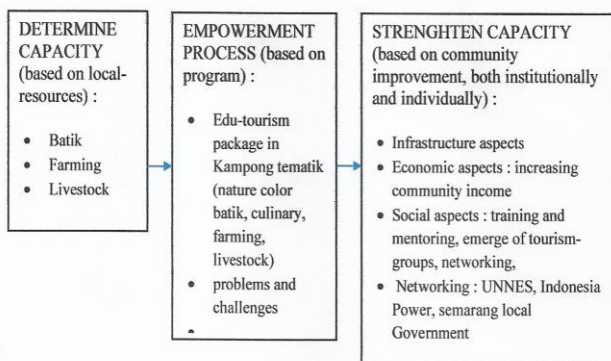


Fig. 2. Community improvement process

Thus, in this context the community has succeeded in identifying various resources in the form of both human resources and natural resources in accordance with the capabilities of the community. All of these resources are then managed by the local community through a community-based thematic kampung program that combines elements of agriculture, livestock, natural batik making, and culinary. Through this local people involvement, the processes of strengthening community capacity are realized in various aspects. Even the various

problems and challenges faced further strengthen the capacity of the community to be more confident to develop all the potential that exists.

**XI. CONCLUSION**

The dynamics of the Malon thematic kampung shows a stretch of community empowerment process based on local community and local resources. With all the limitations, problems, and challenges, the community remains optimistic to continue this program. The community self-confidence is owned because of the experience in the implementation of the thematic village which strengthen the community capacity in terms of infrastructure, economy, and social networks.

**REFERENCES**

- [1] R. Alsop, M. F. Bertelsen, and J. Holland, *Empowerment in Practice: From Analysis to Implementation*. Washington: World Bank, 2005.
- [2] F. Sidik, "Menggali Potensi Lokal Mewujudkan Kemandirian Desa," *JKAP (Jurnal Kebijakan. dan Adm. Publik)*, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 115–131, 2015.
- [3] K. Bappenas, "Membedah Angka Kemiskinan Dan Kesenjangan : Rilis Data Terkini BPS," 2018.
- [4] P. Semarang, "gerbanghebat.semarangkota.go.id."
- [5] A. Mandić, Ž. Mrnjavac, and L. Kordić, "Tourism Infrastructure, Recreational Facilities And Tourism Development," *Tour. Hosp. Manag.*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 1–22, 2017.
- [6] H. Hanan, "Stay, Play, and Learn at Bali Aga Traditional Village," in *Proceedings of the 6th International Conference of Arte-Polis*, 2017, pp. 139–148.
- [7] J. Stange, D. Brown, R. Hilbruner, and D. E. Hawkins, "Tourism Destination Management. Achieving Sustainable and Competitive Results," *Int. Inst. Tour. Stud. from Geogr. Washingt. Univ. Washingt. DC, USA*, 2011.
- [8] D. M. T. Hoang, "Acting together: How rural tourism can promote sustainable human development," *J. Bus. Econ.*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 607–612, 2015.
- [9] D. D. Perkins and M. A. Zimmerman, "Empowerment theory, research, and application," *Am. J. Community Psychol.*, vol. 23, no. 5, pp. 569–579, 1995.
- [10] D. Kaufmane and A. Eglite, "Private and public sector cooperation in tourism.," in *Economic Science for Rural Development Conference Proceedings*, 2016, no. 42.
- [11] J. Yang, L. Zhang, and C. Ryan, *Social Conflict and Harmony: Tourism in China's Multi-ethnic Communities*. Emerald Group Publishing, 2016.
- [12] O. Paresishvili, L. Kvaratskhelia, and V. Mirzaeva, "Rural tourism as a promising trend of small business in Georgia: Topicality, capabilities, peculiarities," *Ann. Agrar. Sci.*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 344–348, 2017.