

The Empowerment of Community Potential in Cirawamekar Village, Cipatat District, West Bandung Regency (A Case Study of Wayang Golek Craftsmen)

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ABSTRACT

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One of the functions of government is to empower the community to achieve equity and accelerate welfare. For this reason, the government has formed government units down to the village level so that the empowerment process can run well and on target. Cirawamekar is a village in West Bandung Regency that has the potential for wood crafting in the form of Wayang Golek and souvenirs. Unfortunately, amid increasing appreciation coming from the international community, this does not have an impact on the welfare of the artisans in Cirawamekar Village. For this reason, this research was conducted to see the empowerment efforts carried out by the village government for the craftsmen. Through a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach, this study found that the empowerment efforts carried out by the Cirawamekar Village government for the craftsmen were not optimal. The basic needs of the craftsmen, specifically promotion and marketing, have not been able to be carried out by the Cirawamekar Village government.

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A. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has a luxury of art and culture that is very diverse, ranging from performing arts to objects that hold high cultural value, such as *Wayang Golek* – a traditional Sundanese puppet. As a form of art, *Wayang Golek* is not only used as souvenirs but is also often shown as a performing art. Moreover, the performance of *Wayang Golek* always carries morals, religious, and even political messages. *Wayang Golek* became a quite effective medium to deliver such messages until the 20th century.

The unique characteristic of *Wayang Golek* as a work of art has received international appreciation by being designated as an *Intangible Cultural Heritage* by UNESCO in 2003. This also became the reason that attracted a French researcher, Sarah Andrieu, to do further investigation on the art of *Wayang Golek*.

Andrieu's research found that the recognition of *Wayang Golek* as a cultural heritage by UNESCO encourages public awareness to appreciate and preserve *Wayang Golek*. Public interest in

Wayang Golek has also increased in recent years, resulting in the sporadic emergence of *Wayang Golek* community which succeeded in embracing the millennials to grow their love for it. However, since the Covid 19 pandemic, *Wayang Golek* can no longer be performed according to the government policies that prohibit mass crowds. (Mahar Prastiwi, 2022)

The absence of *Wayang Golek* performances also affected the craftsmen, as experienced by Ramdan Kosasih (60 years old) who is a seller as well as a craftsman of *Wayang Golek* from Braga, Bandung. According to him, the pandemic had a significant impact on his income from selling *Wayang Golek*. In fact, Kosasih stated that his sale of *Wayang Golek* has already declined before the Covid-19 pandemic. It seems in the millennial era, people's interest in this West Java-style art continues to decline and they seem to not care about the preservation of this Sundanese culture. (Azhari, 2020)

A similar situation was also experienced by Abah Ishak (57 years old), a *Wayang Golek* craftsman from Cianjur who is finding it increasingly difficult to sell his art due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Ironically, the local government gives a little to no attention to *Wayang Golek* artisans, as if preserving culture is not one of their concerns (Purwanda, 2020)

As stated by Kartiwa (34 years old), a carver of *Wayang Golek* from Cirawamekar Village in West Bandung District, most people now do not have much interest in *Wayang Golek*, either as a performance art or as a means of playing, and are more interested in modern games using advanced technology. (Restu Nugraha, 2021)

Apart from fading with the times, according to Kartiwa, the Covid-19 pandemic has also worsened the condition of the *Wayang Golek* craftsmen. His works of art, which are usually displayed and sold in souvenir centers in various areas such as Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and Bali cannot be sold, and are piled up in his residence because of the pandemic. (Ari Syahril Ramadhan, 2021)

If we take a closer look, there are some interesting points from the statements above. First, the Covid 19 pandemic gave a significant impact to *Wayang Golek*, both as a performance of art and as a means of playing or souvenirs. Second, the results of Sarah Andrieu's research found that after the confirmation of *Wayang Golek* as a cultural heritage by UNESCO, the level of appreciation and public interest in *Wayang Golek* increased. However, the result of the study came in contrast to the acknowledgment of sellers and craftsmen who felt a decline in public interest to *Wayang Golek*. In other words, the increasing appreciation from the public does not seem to increase the welfare of the sellers and craftsmen of *Wayang Golek* itself. Thus, this raises the question – what is the role of the government in the empowerment of *Wayang Golek* craftsmen and how do they help the craftsmen in achieving their welfare in the midst of the increasing appreciation from the national and international community?

Indonesian Act no. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government, regional authorities are given the authority to manage their own affairs under *Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia* (The Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia). In implementing such act, they shall be entitled and authorized to perform all aspects of governance, with the consideration of economic capabilities, regional potentials, territorial size, and local diversity. In addition, they must carry out the governance functions, such as services, development, empowerment, and role enhancement of the community they are authorized of.

As a means to accelerate equitable development and community welfare, Indonesian Act no. 23 of 2014 recognize village as a unit of indigenous peoples who have the right and authority to regulate their own affairs. Through this regional autonomy, it is expected that the community and village can grow and develop into independent and prosperous entities.

In accordance with the act, Article 1 paragraph (12) of Act No. 6 of 2014 on Village mentions that the village authorities shall empower the community to promote independence and welfare by improving knowledge, attitude, skills, behavior, abilities, awareness, and leveraging resources through policies, programs, activities, and assistance in accordance with the core issues and the primary needs of the villagers.

In such context, the craftsmen of *Wayang Golek* in Cirawamekar Village are parts of the local's potential that should be optimally developed to improve the community's welfare. Thus, this became the main reason as to why this study concerning the empowerment of community potential in Cirawamekar Village, especially the *Wayang Golek* craftsmen, was conducted.

Article 1 paragraph (2) of Act No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government mentions that regional governance is an embodiment of governmental affairs in regions based on the principles of autonomy and co-administration task based on the extensive principles of autonomy within the system and principles of *Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia*.

Furthermore, it is stated in paragraph (6) that regional autonomy is the rights, authorities and obligations of autonomous region to regulate and manage its own government affairs and the interest of the local community. Meanwhile, the co-administrative tasks are described in paragraph (11) as the assignment from central government to autonomous regions to implement portions of government affairs, of which is the authority of the central government or from regional government to its reGENCY or municipal regions to carry out part of the government affairs which are the authority of the provincial government.

Citing Rahayu (2017:1), the implementation of local government is aimed to accelerate the realization of community welfare through improvement in services, empowerment, and role enhancement of the community as well as increasing regional competitiveness with the consideration on the principles of democracy, equity, justice, and the uniqueness of an area in the system of *Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia*.

Thus, one of the important tasks of local government is community empowerment as an attempt to realize community welfare so that it has high competitiveness, and social and economic independence.

To accelerate the equitable development and social welfare process, Indonesian Act No. 23 of 2014 recognizes the existence of village as autonomous regions. Village autonomy encourages village government to regulate their own affairs as well as carry out the development based on the needs and initiative of the community.

Article 1 paragraph (43) of Act No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government and Article 1 paragraph (1) of Act No. 6 of 2014 on Village define village as legal community unit that has territorial boundaries and authorization to regulate and manage government affairs, including its own local community's interest based on their initiative, rights of origin, and/ or traditional rights that are recognized and respected in the government system of *Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia*.

As defined by Kartohadikusumo (1953), village is a legal entity in which a community that has the power to hold its own government resides, whereas Bintaro defined village as the embodiment or unity of geography, social, economy, politics, and culture that exists in an area in a reciprocal relationship and influence with other regions (cited in Rahayu, 2018:179).

On the other hand, Village Government, as referred in Act 1 paragraph (2), is the administration of government affairs and the interests of local communities in the government system of *Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia*.

Thus, it might be concluded that village is a community unit that has the power to hold its own government and carry out its life in accordance with mutually agreed rules or customs as the applicable law to regulate the pattern of community interaction. This includes managing various potentials and resources to improve the welfare of the community.

The two main assets in the development of a nation, as supposed by Soekidjo (2009:1), are resources – natural and human resources. That means the development would not be realized if either one of the two resources cannot be met. However, among these two, human resources has to be prioritized.

Both resources are considered as potential, which is defined in *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian Official Dictionary) (2008:1096) as strength, ability, and capabilities that have the possibility to be developed. According to Pamungkas (1997:358), potential is abilities that have the capacity to be developed. Meanwhile, it is defined in the scientific dictionary as strength, ability, capability, influence, power, and function (cited in Hamid, 2010:504).

Therefore, village potential is all the power, strength, and ability possessed by a village that has the possibility to be developed in order to improve the welfare of the local community. It includes all natural and human resources owned by the village as the basic capital that needs to be managed and

developed for the survival and development of the village. Village potential consists of the following factors:

1. The physical potential of a village includes the following factors:
 - a. Soil, that also includes mining materials, minerals, and agricultural products as source of living and food.
 - b. Water, including water sources, management, and conditions to support humans needs such as irrigation, fisheries, agriculture, and daily needs.
 - c. Climate, this includes air temperature and rainfall, which have a big influence on agricultural businesses and tourist attractions.
 - d. Farm and fisheries, which is the sources of energy, food (proteins), and income for the local population.
 - e. Human resources as manpower that process and utilize these natural resources.
2. Non-physical potential, which is closely related to cultural resources. This potential includes:
 - a. *Gotong royong*, an attitude of mutual assistance of helping each other in rural communities which also is the power of production and development of the village.
 - b. Social institutions, such as LKMD, LPMD, PKK, *Karang Taruna* (youth organization), and other social organizations that could provide guidance and counseling to the community.
 - c. Creativity of village officials who are able to manage village administration and government in an orderly and smooth manner.

The state of the village potential in each region might not be the same. It is largely determined by at least four factors, namely: 1) geographical environment, 2) population, 3) the size of the region, and 4) type and level of soil fertility in the village.

B. METHOD

This study was conducted using a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach to the results of interviews with relevant informants as a source of research data. The data obtained in this study comes from observation and interview. Informants in this study are determined based on purposive techniques that are data sources sampling techniques with certain considerations. That techniques of checking of validity of the data in this study is by triangulation of the source.

C. RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Conceptually, the word 'empowerment' is rooted from the word 'power'. Thus, it is closely related to the concept of power. Sudarmanto et. al. (2020:21) stated that community empowerment is an attempt to increase the honor and dignity of certain groups in the community who suffer from poverty and underdevelopment.

Community empowerment, citing from Maryani and Nainggolan (2019:8), is a development process that makes people take the initiative to start social activities to improve their own situation and condition.

Thus, community empowerment is an attempt to provide power and strength to the society. It can also be interpreted as the ability of individuals who blend with the community in building the empowerment of the community concerned so that it aims to find new alternatives in community development.

There are four principles that are often used in empowerment programs according to Najiyati, et. al. (2014), they are:

1. **Equality:** This is the main principle that must be embraced. There is an equal position between the community and the institutions that carry out community empowerment programs in this principle.
2. **Participation:** Programs that can stimulate community independence are participatory programs.
3. **Independency:** This principle means to respect and prioritize the capabilities of the community over the assistance of other parties. The poor are not seen as an incapable object but as a subject who has little ability.

4. **Continuity:** Principally, an empowerment program must have a sustainable goal. It must gradually give the community dominant roles for empowerment instead of being as dominant assistance.

These four tenets must be simultaneously implemented so that the empowerment processes are able to give strength and independency to the community in a sustainable manner. This principle of giving power to the powerless in the process of empowerment can actually be realized. The implementation of these empowerment principles is considered to be successful if the following indicators are met. The indicators are: (1) the community actually acts as the actors in the development; (2) the development programs carried out are truly based on community participation where they have been involved since the policy stipulation, planning, and implementation, to the management of the development outcomes; (3) the community are giving their contributions within their limits and capabilities, either it in the form of natural resources, human resources or financial resources; and (4) the implemented development program is not only project-based but is sustainable.

Cirawamekar in Cipatat District, West Bandung Regency which majority of the population are farmers and on-farm labors is a village in West Java. Some of the residents are craftsmen who make *Wayang Golek*, both for shows or performances as well as a means of toys and souvenirs for tourists, local and international.

UNESCO's recognition of *Wayang Golek* as a cultural heritage continuously increased the interest and appreciation from the public, both locally and internationally. However, this increase did not give much positive impact to the artisans in Cirawamekar. Moreover, with the Covid 19 pandemic, the condition of *Wayang Golek* craftsmen in Cirawamekar are actually getting worse.

According to the village head of Cirawamekar, Suhendar, the local government has tried to run the functions of empowerment to the community, such as providing social assistance for underprivileged residents as well as giving capital investment for entrepreneurs, including *Wayang Golek* craftsmen which are included in the local government budget of Cirawamekar. However, Suherlan acknowledged the assistance was very limited, both in terms of nominal and in the number of recipients, so not all craftsmen were able to get capital assistance.

In addition to capital assistance, the village government also sought to introduce the products of Cirawamekar Village craftsmen to a wider community, such as participating in several events or exhibitions about village potential held by the West Bandung District Government. In 2016, the local government of Cirawamekar also facilitated one of its members to make a set of *Wayang Golek* for a French client. However, there was no more order, both from local and international customers.

Head of Government and Empowerment of Cirawamekar, Ali, also stated the same thing. According to him, the government of Cirawamekar Village has tried to empower the community, including the craftsmen according to their abilities and capacities. In addition, Ali also admitted that he has also promoted *Wayang Golek* products made by the local community to his colleagues outside Java, as well as through social media. Through this attempt, it was expected that the craftsmen could be more empowered.

The impact of Covid 19 pandemic, as said by Ali, was very heavy on the economic condition of the people of Cirawamekar. The work of arts by the craftsmen of *Wayang Golek* and souvenirs were really difficult to be sold. This situation is also worsened with even more various modern toys which attract the interest of the millennials.

According to Ali, in addition to village government in Cirawamekar, West Bandung District has also carried out attempt to help the empowerment by including these handicraft products in various development exhibitions, both at the regional and national level. *Wayang Golek* was not the only products that was displayed in the exhibition, there were also other various works of art that can be used as souvenirs, such as miniature ships, airplanes, guitars and so on.

A *Wayang Golek* craftsman, Maman, said that the government of Cirawamekar has tried to facilitate his needs to develop his artistic works. However, these efforts have not been done in maximum extent, especially in terms of introducing and marketing the work of processed wood craftsmen in Cirawamekar Village. According to Maman, the wood craftsmen - both who made *Wayang Golek* and souvenirs - are more likely to survive by independent attempts, such as selling their works in souvenir shops in various regions, without any intervention from the government, so it is rather difficult to develop, especially to improve the welfare of the craftsmen.

Another *Wayang Golek* craftsman, Kartiwa, agreed with Maman's statement. He admitted that the effort from the government to improve the welfare of craftsmen in Cirawamekar is a little to no

attention. Kartiwa admitted that he is very concerned about the government's lack of attention to the craftsmen. Instead of empowering, it seems that the government do not really have much care about perceiving this traditional art of West Java.

This little appreciation from the local's government, as supposed by Kartiwa, has an impact to the decreasing interest from the community for *Wayang Golek*, especially the millennials. They do not seem to have much interest in the art heritage which is believed to be due by the lack of education and concern from the government for the development of *Wayang Golek*.

Kartiwa acknowledged that there were several craftsmen who received capital assistance, both from the village and regional government. However, he believed it was not enough to empower the welfare of the craftsmen. He is assured that support in the form of marketing, promotion, and act of introducing the art of *Wayang Golek* to the wider community is much more important to help the craftsmen. Thus, it will increase appreciation from the community which of course has an impact on improving the welfare of the craftsmen and the artists of *Wayang Golek*.

Yana, a souvenir craftsman from Cirawamekar Village, also expressed a similar complaint. He admitted of receiving capital assistance to support his business which he used to buy some work equipment. Such assistance was quite meaningful according to him, but the hardship of marketing his products made the business still difficult to develop. Therefore, now Yana is taking more orders for wedding souvenirs, such as keychains, which its economic value is far lower than the miniature artwork of ships and airplanes which in addition to the good economic rate, also have high artistic value.

As a craftsman, Yana expects both the village and regional government to have more concern to the welfare of the local word craft artisans in Cirawamekar. Given the post Covid 19 pandemic situation, he claimed that it has not yet positively impacted the welfare of the craftsmen.

D. CONCLUSION

1. Empowerment is a long process and could not be done in any instant ways. It needs comprehensive sustainable programs. This means that the attempts done by the village government of Cirawamekar to empower the local *Wayang Golek* craftsmen have neither reach the expected outcomes nor covering the root of the issue faced by the craftsmen.
2. The business capital assistance given to a small number of craftsmen, in fact, has not been able to make the craftsmen more empowered. As a result, craftsmen are unable to compete with the presence of modern toys that seem to be more attractive to the millennials.
3. The artisans of *Wayang Golek* and souvenirs are the potential of Cirawamekar. Unfortunately, such potential has not been optimally managed to help improving the welfare of the local population, especially the craftsmen.

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