The Role of “GeMaSPeKoLa” in Supporting The Preservation of Semarang Old Town

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Abstract: Semarang is one of capital cities in Central Java province, Indonesia which has three main aspects of sustainable urban development. Semarang city is very famous among other cities due to the historical value. There are some historical buildings just like “Lawang Sewu”, “Blenduk Church”, “Old Post Office”, “Cathedral Church”, etc and historical districts like “Old City”, “China Town”, “Johar Traditional Market” and “Sekayu kampoong” existed in Semarang city which are good to be visited by tourists. The architectural style of the historical buildings and areas are mostly coloured and designed by the Dutch. Furthermore, the history of Semarang city is formed through a long and unique history. Semarang city was colonized by the Dutch 400 years. This could be characterized by a variety of historical relics and ancient buildings existed right now in the city. Remembering the role of Semarang historical story especially for young generation, therefore, it seems to be needed a comprehensive conceptual thinking to polish that pearls to be more shiny. Local government of Semarang City has an effort to preserve all of the historic assets to sustain the local value of the city. Local government has plan to register these historic assets to be one of World Class Heritage. By doing so, it is expected that the history of Semarang City would not easily diminish. To visualize that, Regional conservation regulation is stipulated by local government in order to protect the historical buildings and districts during the process to become one of World Heritages.

Local Government likewise invite local people to participate in the preservation activities. Local people is encouraged to perform community forum that especially concern about preservation. By providing technical assistances, local government tried to increase the knowledge and consciousness of local people towards preservation activities. But the problems then arised was that some historical buildings and areas have changed already. There were some local people changed the function of old building especially in Old Town withoutr concerning the preservation. They changed the fa?ade instead of keeping the old fa?ade of old building. This has broken the preservation regulation that already set by the government.

Based on the above matter, this research is tried to manage one preservation of the pearls which is Old Town area through the development of humanistic conservation concept, namely “GeMaSPeKoLa”. By using descriptive method, researcher would like to describe in detail the role of “GeMaSPeKoLa” as social community that concern towards the Old Town Preservation. This kind of social forum will then lead to strengthen local people to participate in the preservation activities and bring Old Town to be World Heritage. The Old Town is actually unique due to the historical story and kept a lot of heritage value. As one of the most famous tourist attraction in Central Java, a lot of tourists are coming and visiting Old Town. There are
many factors forces local people to make any changes in their living. Therefore, this method is fit to explain all the phenomena related to that matter including social cohesion. This research is basically supported by primary and secondary data. Observation and in-depth interview are executed to explore about the role of “GeMaSPeKoLa” in reducing the occurred problems regarding Old Town Preservation.

The expected outcome of this research would be strategy to optimize the role of “GeMaSPeKoLa” in the preservation activities particularly to support Old Town to become World Heritage.

1.1 Background

Old Town is one of ancient building complexes which became the center of Semarang City in Dutch colonial era. The building complex is known as Semarang Old Town. Actually, the Old Town was originally the center of Semarang City, there are various government buildings and the number of other supporting buildings as elements of the city center with Dutch architectural style.

The Old Town as one of Semarang City’s assets along with the number of high value historical buildings, demands a serious handling, not only from the government of Semarang, but also from the community. It is absolutely necessary as an effort to preserve the historical value of Semarang City, considering the Old Town is currently proposed as the World Heritage and one of international tourism destination which capable to increase the local revenue.

The Old Town as something stands in the midst of continuous change, of course can not avoid the growth of new buildings in the region which often do not pay attention and concern to the conservation aspects. Therefore, Semarang City Government together with the community need to preserve the Old Town, so it can keep the architectural value of the ancient buildings in the Old Town.

Community participation in conserving the cultural heritage is one of the priorities that must be achieved in every activity of the utilization of cultural heritage site conservation. The problem that currently happened is that most of the citizen did not care that the Old Town area should be protected and preserved. This problem could be seen for example: some of the ancient buildings in the Old Town have already changed totally the performance and some of them were sold out. Some are left damaged, not well maintained and the dirty environment. Local government itself did not provide enough conservation incentive to the people. This condition will then lead to the reason that people who own the old building did not have enough money to do some maintainances. Therefore, community participation in conservation of cultural heritage is one of the priorities that must be achieved in every conservation activity of the cultural heritage objects.

Conservation efforts must have an impact on the increasing of public awareness about the importance of the existence of cultural heritage buildings-objects, so the citizen will easily invite to be more care, aware and involve in the participation of conservation activity. While, the role of government are only protect and give supervision to community to direct all
the conservation activities so that it will not come out from the corridor of the applicable conservation law. Various conservation movements of the community that care of the Old Town is formed in some groups. In this research, it so called “GeMasPeKoLa”. “GeMasPeKola” is mostly a community movement that concern about Old Town conservation. There were many activities/movement had already done to conserve and preserve the Old Town. These activities actually were aimed to increase the awareness of all part of the community to work together, hand in hand to realize the Old Town to become world heritage. The role of the Old Town’s community care movement (GeMasPeKoLa) is become very important especially in supporting the government’s efforts in preserving the Old Town and the surrounding environment as one of the world's tourism destinations.

For further understanding of the role of “GeMasPeKoLa”, the following descriptions will provide more informations to consider a context of Semarang Old Town as a heritage site, community participation for public issue, and community’s group for conservation activities.

2. THEORITICAL REVIEW

2.1 Conservation and Preservation

Conservation is generally defined as preservation but based on conservation experts it has a various meaning of different implications. The term conservation commonly used by architects refers to the Charter of the International Council of Monuments and Site (ICOMOS) in 1981 known as Burra Charter. Burra Charter mentions that "conservation is the concept of the process of managing a place or space or object so that the cultural meanings contained therein is well preserved." Actually, this understanding needs to be expanded more specifically in example the maintenance of morphology (physical form) and its function. Conservation activities include all maintenance activities in accordance with local conditions and situations as well as development efforts for further utilization. When associated with the area, the conservation of the area like Old Town in Semarang City or sub-section of the city includes an attempt to prevent the social change activities or utilization which is not appropriate and not just in a physical form.

A conservation program should not only be maintained for it’s authenticity and maintenance, but does not bring economic value or other benefits to the owner or the citizen. The dynamic preservation concept is not only gets the goal of building maintenance achieved but can produced income and other benefits for the owner. In this case, the role of architect is very important in determining the appropriate function because not all functions can be included. These activities require cross-sectoral, multi-dimensional and disciplined, and sustainable efforts. And preservation is an attempt to create a cultural heritage of the future (future heritage), as historians said that history is the future of the nation. The present and the
future is the past of the next generation. (Wirastari, Volare Amanda and Suprihardjo, Rimadewi, 2012)

2.2. People Participation

According to Samart (2015) social or public participation is a socialized process that people can involve, influence or decide on public issues which they are relevant as a stakeholder; or they feel being a part of it. The level of participation can be varied and that represented not only how important of the issue but also show social ecology, structure and quality of life in a community as well. The participation is interestingly defined by Arnstein (1969) in the Samart (2015) on the concept of ladder, named “ladder of citizen participation” metaphor the height of the ladder to be a quality of participation. The concept contents the ladder eight different levels which are perfectly clear the steps of how people participant to a public issue in varied density depends on their personal authority.

While the community refers to an entity substance that is composited by different groups via a certain interactive mode in a certain region. (Healey P., 1998). Every community has their own interest, roles in the city and society, which usually determine its development inclines and goals. Community participation usually refers to a policy-making process that is made via the official or unofficial cooperation among the professionals, family member, the community organization, and the administrative officers (Healey P., 1998). The achievement of the community participation is related to the awakening and rising of the sense of community from local residence. The sense of community is the pre-condition of the community participation and the participation can encourage the residents to deeply consider how to combine their personal interest with the future of the society and economy, thereby improving the quality of the community participation.

The approach of community participation and efforts in cultural heritage preservation have a similarity that is tend to be dynamic. Community participation is capable for mobilizing resources as needed (Hall, 1999) while preserving cultural reserves is a process of accepting environmental change. Thus, community participation in conservation of cultural heritage is the process of community involvement in the effort to maintain the existence of cultural heritage so that it can be realized the preservation of sustainable cultural heritage. According to Person and Sullivan (2001), there are several stages in the preservation of cultural heritage, namely:

1. Identification and description of cultural heritage sites
2. Interpretation of cultural heritage sites
3. Planning and making policies on preservation of cultural heritage
4. Implementation of established policies
2.2 Semarang Old Town

The Old Town of Semarang is located in Bandarharjo Village, North Semarang Subdistrict. The boundary of the Old Town of Semarang are: the north is Jalan Merak with its Tawang station, the east is Cendrawasih Road, the South is Sendowo Street and the west area Mpu Tantular Street and along the Semarang River. The Old Town of Semarang is about 0.3125 km². Kampung Europe is the name for the Semarang Old Town inhabited by Dutch people. The more common area referred as Semarang Old Town began to develop in 1741. In the beginning, the European region was only the office buildings and warehouses but later developed into a cultural and trading center with many emerging hotels, elite housing and several other buildings. The fundamental feature of a European Village is the design of the buildings with an art deco architecture. (Punto, 2015)

Like the other cities under Dutch colonial rule, many forts were built as military centers. This fort is on pentagonal shape and first built on the west side of the Semarang Old Town. The fort has only one gate on it’s south side and five watchtowers. Then the Dutch settlement began to grow on the east side of the "Vijfhoek" fort. Many houses, churches and office buildings were built in this settlement. This settlement is the forerunner of Semarang Old Town. This settlement is known as "de Europeeshe Buurt". The form of urban planning and human settlement architecture is designed similar to urban planning and architecture in the Netherlands. Semarang River was formed to resemble Canals in the Netherlands. At that time, the Vijfhoek Fort not merged with the Dutch settlement yet.

Semarang Old Town was planned as the center of Dutch colonial government with its many colonial buildings. This occurred after the signing of an agreement between Mataram and VOC on January 15th, 1678. Life inside the Fort was well developed. New buildings started to appeared. The Dutch colonial government built a new Christian church called the "Emmanuel" church now known as "Gereja Blenduk". On the north of the Fort were built military command center to ensure the defense and security inside the fort.

In 1824, the gate and the watchtower of this fort began to be demolished. The Dutch and other Europeans started to occupy the settlement around Bojong Road (now 'Pemuda’ Street). In this era, Semarang Old Town has grown into a complete small city. At Governor General Daendels time (1808-1811), post roads (Postweg) were built between Anyer and Panarukan. The "de Heerenstraat" street (now the Let.Jend.Suprapto Street) becomes part of the post road (van Lier, H.P.J. 1928).

A quarter of a century after the end of the VOC, Dutch settlements began to expand to Bojong Road, to westward (Daendels street) and along the Mataram road. By the 20th century, the Old Town grew rapidly and many trading offices, banks, insurance offices, notaries, hotels and shops were built. On the eastern side of the Belenduk Church, an open field was built
for military parades or musical performances held in the afternoon (van Velsen M.M.F. 1931).

The Old Town area of Semarang was designed in accordance with the concept of cities in Europe, both based on area structure and architectural aesthetic image. This area has a centralized pattern with government buildings and Blenduk Church as its center. The pattern of urban design is the same with the cities in Europe. While the character and uniqueness of building architecture in this area is shown through the appearance of building details, ornaments, and decorative elements in the architectural elements. With the existence of Semarang Old Town, the image of European architecture has been present and adds a sense of architectural diversity in Central Java and the surrounding areas, and in turn enriched the architectural treasures of the country.

![Figure 1. Semarang Old Town Maps](source: Antariksa Sudikno. Arsitektur E-Journal Volume 1, No. 3, November 2008)

3. METHODOLOGY

The research method used in this study is a qualitative approach by using an exploratory case study method. Explorative case study is a method that emphasizes in the exploration of a case in order to know the basics of problems of conservation and facilitate researchers to find significant ways to reduce the problems. This study also try to find in detail the interaction between phenomena associated with the individual, community, or even institutions in conserving Kota Lama.

There were some steps undertaken in this research, as follows:

1. Collecting Data
Datas were collected based on primary and secondary datas. Primary data included information about the role of community groups that concern towards Kota Lama conservation (GeMasPeKoLa). The method used is indepth interview. Secondary data is about data taken from references, documentation paper, and visual observation. In visual observation activities, the researcher is just an independent observer meaning that the observer is free to observe, examine and do the measure. According to Spreiregen (1965) in Lalu Mulyadi (2014), a visual observation activity is very good to know the composition, the city shape and to evaluate the potentials and the shortcomings of a city.

2. Analyzing Data

Empirical data were collected adopting two methods, namely interview and visual observation, by the researcher. The findings of the triangulation analysis will be matched with the described theories according to the theoretical background, so that the main characteristic of the Role of ‘GeMasPeKoLa’ will be discovered.

3. Concluding Research Finding

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Semarang Old Town as one of the cultural heritage objects in Semarang City with its uniqueness, proposed as World Heritage. But until now, the efforts to improve the quality of the buildings and environment in Semarang Old Town area has not been optimalize yet. With the increasing of connectivity and mobility of modernization, the purpose of conserving is becoming more abundant and frequently changing. Mo, Weiqiang Wang, (2014). As a result, combined with this process and its result, to analyze the role of ‘GeMasPeKoLa’ in conserving Semarang Old Town, will be a kind of attempt at exploring patterns and activities of community groups, which will help to inspire and refine the ideal model of people participation in the conservation activities.

Semarang City Government has made efforts to preserve the existing cultural heritage buildings by revitalizing Semarang Old Town with the enactment of Local Regulation No. 16 of 2003 on the Old Town Building and Environment Planning (RTBL). The result of Semarang City Government efforts to revive the Old Town, can not be directly enjoyed, although some activities have been done, that is by put the paving blocks on Old Town street, installing old-fashioned street lights, utilizing Polder Tawang as a place of recreation. Semarang Old Town area according to some informants can be used as identity or landmark of Semarang City, considering the Old Town past as the government center and trade center.

The government's desire to embrace the citizen to involve in the conservation activities and make citizen to become a core concept of conservation has been already done. It means stated that local community and other agents to actively participate in conserving Old Town. In fact, this module is emerged in other field work but on heritage and conservation in
community level and city level are never happened before. One of the activities made by the local government was public market that located inside the Old Town. This public market consisted of many people that sold antique things and any other old things. To support the government programs related to the conservations, communities initiated to form Old Town Care Community Movement (Gerakan Masyarakat Peduli Kota Lama: GeMasPeKoLa). This group of people is used as economic, social, and cultural growth generator for the wider citizen particularly to achieve: Environmental balance, security-safety & public health and sustainable urban living. However, the GeMasPeKoLa performs under a volunteer concept and still needs a subsidy from the government agency by proposing a project annually. For community based organizations are also confronting with the same situation and just recently, their committee are coin a new policy to do some social entrepreneur projects aim to sustain their own resources and wish to have more effective and impact in a higher level.

To guarantee its succeeded, the formal government guidance is needed. It can be an ordinary MoU and then followed by the establishment of new related regulation. The public awareness about conservation activities in Semarang Old Town area has already existed since the government announced that Semarang Old Town would be proposed as World Heritage. People have agreed to support and execute the conservation activities and willing to do any related activities together with local government and academic experts. But, on the other hand, based on the field surveys (Sudikno, 2017), some communities still did not aware about preservation and conservation activities in Semarang Old Town. Therefore, the activities of Semarang Old Town preservation have not been able to run properly. Although its still partial, not synergistic and not well organized, the awareness of community participation in the preservation of the city's heritage, needs to be widely and sustainably supported by the Semarang City Government and the Academic Society. Means that local government and academic experts should continously provide technical assistant to local people in doing conservation activities, so that all people activities could be directed to achieve World Heritage as target of Semarang Old Town conservation.

![Figure 2. Three pillars of actors in the conservation of Old Town](image-url)
Currently, in the Old Town itself, a lot of activities has been used to revive Semarang Old City as historical tourism destination. These activities were mostly held by communities and city government. Actually the Semarang City Government did not remain silent while seeing the existence of Old Town area which became worst. Semarang City Government has issued Local Regulation No. 8 of 2003 on Old Town Building and Environment (RTBL). However, despite the existing regulations that regulate it, the condition of the old Old Town area is still apprehensive. It is because the application of the law is still very minimal. Semarang City Government and the citizen should be more active and observant to see the development of Semarang Old Town. Semarang city government should apply the strategic concepts in the effort to preserve the Semarang Old Town. This concept should be run actively, periodically, and continuously and also required the participation of Semarang society optimally.

![Figure 3. All Group of Participants in the Conservation of Old Town](image)

The preservation of the city's heritage needs to be more intensively socialized to the wider citizen as a synergistic act, which can produce social, economic, and cultural benefits for collective life, which is not merely documented. Furthermore, it is necessary to do a colossal proclamation of this conservation effort, which is a program of urban cultural heritage preservation which is able to involve the citizen participation. In the Old Town itself there is the Old Town Concerned Community Movement pioneered by citizen who are aware of the importance of maintaining the area. At the same time, some parties then get involved and try to bring the area to become a better cultural heritage area.

Ten years ago, an activity titled Denting Dawai and Kota Tua was held. The events in form of concert music was held in several buildings in the Old Town area. Jentera City with the Cultural Heritage and Community Tobong
Indonesia, the organizer of the event, trying to open the latch on the Old Town. They are about to thrill the pulse of life in the region. After being held several times, the event stalled. The Old Town was quiet again. Just three or last four years, the effort to revive the inhabited dozens of colonial heritage buildings area, again heard. Following the records, the preservation of the Old Town began in 1995 by a Semarang architect. Until the early 2000’s, he kept trying to convince the people and government to reorganize the Old Town. Even he called to make the Old Town Foundation, so the conservation plan will go smoothly. However, his name then disappeared simultaneously with conservation efforts there.

Then the other communities who care about the Old Town, started to appeared. The movement of preservation of the Old Town Region of the last few years can be called as a new form. The movement was spearheaded by communities who were aware of the importance of safeguarding the area. At the same time, some parties then get involved and try to bring the area to become better cultural heritage area. The role of communities such as “Oase”, “Lopen”, “Kokakola”, “Orartoret”, and others is very significant to make the Old Town area alive. They repeatedly held activities at some point in the Old Town area. Some, even have a regular agenda, so it can be a fixed schedule for people to come and enjoy. Oens Semarang Foundation also played a major role through the Old Town Festival with the Sentiling Market theme. The theme was taken from the Koloniaale Tentoostiling event which was held a hundred years ago in the city of Semarang. They are even determined to bring the Old Town Region as a legacy of world heritage in 2020.

Likewise, AMBO is a community group consisting of building owners in Semarang Old Town that made any movement to preserve Old Town. Their

![Figure 4. Community Groups of Old Town Conservation](image-url)
buildings varied, ranging from empty buildings to buildings that have been conserved and switch functions into commercial buildings. The role of AMBO includes discussing the problems that occurred in the Old Town of Semarang, then find any solution and communicate it to the people of Semarang Old Town so that they could realized it. For example, if there are problems such as blocked drainage, AMBO plays a role in mobilizing residents of Kota Semarang, to work together to fix it. Therefore, AMBO has contributed greatly to the preservation of the Old Town. Some of the problems that underlie the emergence of the Old Town Care Movement Community are:

1. Old Town environment that decreased in quality
2. Many ancient buildings are damaged and abandoned
3. Some buildings have been transformed into modern buildings
4. Most of the people do not understand the old building conservation rules properly
5. High criminality

The community activities include counseling to the citizens of Semarang Old Town regarding the rules of buildings conservation appropriately, so that the old building owners can renovate or reuse their buildings in accordance with the correct rules of building conservation. After counseling, other activities that also undertaken are mentoring especially when the resident renovate the old building, to help supervise and giving advice during the renovation process and to confirm the conservation rules. Regarding other activities, AMBO also becomes a bridge between residents and other Semarang Old Town communities, in an effort to preserve the Old Town of Semarang. People's concern for the Old Town is also felt by the architects who are members of "Sketcher". These community groups consist of architecture students from many universities, architects, architecture lecturer, and some other communities. They often hold drawings activities of any old buildings in Semarang Old Town and many other places outside Old Town. The output of the drawing, they usually exhibited in Semarang Art Gallery and they uploaded also in social media. These activities will then attract conservation observer to involve in that kind of activities.

On the other hand, the main constrain in encouraging local people to involve in the “GeMasPeKoLa” is lack of knowledge about conservation principle. Hence, many local people tried to develop the Old Town area basically based on there own perception about conservation. Another problem is lack of systematic planning of “GeMasPeKoLa”. Planning is very important to be prepared by “GeMasPeKoLa” before doing anything and that is why, planning is necessary for people’s participation in the conservation of Old Town development. A project can be fruitful and success by using this systematic planning. But in reality, there is no systematic planning for people’s participation in conservation development. Therefore, there are many activities done by group of people (“GeMasPeKoLa) could not directed properly to achieve the expected conservation target of conserving Old Town set by local government.
Based on the above analysis, it could be said that the proper strategy implemented to increase community group participation in the preservation of Semarang Old Town are the following:

1. Providing technical assistance to community group done by local government and academic institution
2. Providing any consultation regarding conservation and preservation to local people
3. Supporting any activities related to Old Town conservation done by local government and academic institution
4. Supporting the existing community group (GeMasPeKoLa) with some funding. Local government should locate some portion of funds from the Annual Development Programme for assisting GeMasPeKoLa to do some activities relating to conservation and preservation of Old Town.
5. Integrating the community group activity with any conservation development project in Old Town, the involving people of this area get benefited by two ways. One is, this project brings the conservation development of Old Town and another is they get employment opportunities on this project.
6. Empowering people participation in a group in terms of conservation and preservation to enable people to manage better or negotiate with existing conservation development system. Being empowered the local people can take any decision for the conservation development programme by using their resources, knowledge and skills.
7. Increasing the sustainability of conservation and preservation of Semarang Old Town done by GeMasPeKoLa. This is important especially to guarantee that in the future the conservation activity would remain executed and starting to explore a new model to achieve Semarang Old Town as World Heritage.
5. CONCLUSION

Old Town Care Community (GeMasPeKoLa) has a significant role in the effort of Semarang Old Town preservation. In their hands conservation activities can run optimally, supported by the role of government and academics. To encourage more participations of Old Town Care Community, the government should give any rewards so that Old Town Care Community could always continue the conservation activities and attracting more community to involve in conservation of Semarang Old Town. Moreover, to enlarge community participation and empower the members, government also give a chance to community to start up different working models in every conservation working steps. Even though, is quite difficult but the challenging is laid forwards of how to transfer the perspective and knowledge on heritage, conservation and community rehabilitation to spread to other community and other generation that can be function on sustainability.

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