

SUSTAINING HERITAGE TOWN AND COMMUNITY THROUGH THE ROLES OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A CASE STUDY OF THE OLD TOWN OF KOTAGEDE, YOGYAKARTA, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores how a heritage-based social enterprise in Kotagede, Yogyakarta, Indonesia manages its works and contributes to the sustainability of local heritage environment. It attempts to fill the gap in the lack of studies about the roles of heritage-based, community-initiated social enterprise in sustaining their group and the surrounding heritage environment. The study used a qualitative approach, which involved interviews with five selected local community members who were selected based on their understanding about the management aspect as well as the local heritage environment. Through a Focus Group Discussion and coding analysis, it was found that KHT is managed to educate community at large about local heritage using a less rigid social entrepreneurship pattern. Findings show that the determinant factors to the sustainability of the group come in four categories, including operations, marketing, human resources, and finance. However, passion is key to top all these determinant factors. Findings of this study will contribute to the sustainability of heritage city and community of the SDGs.

Keywords: sustainability, heritage, social entrepreneurship, sustainable cities and communities, yogyakarta

INTRODUCTION

Conscious heritage conservation can be defined as a formal process of deliberate planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of heritage conservation that is undertaken by a government or a community because of the value of heritage (Novelo, 2025). It differs from the heritage conservation practiced by a community or an individual in a spontaneous and informal manner, in that no or less intentional planning involves (Aygen, 2012). An example of inadvertent heritage conservation can be the transmission of traditional values and ways of living by previous generations of a community to their ensuing generations. On the other hand, conscious heritage conservation can be exemplified by an intentional and careful process of selecting and conserving a community's heritage based on its values or significance. Conscious heritage conservation usually includes goal and objectives setting, planning, implementation of plans, and monitoring and evaluation of the implemented plans, such as those conducted by UNESCO.

The works of conscious heritage conservation are not solely those of the public or the public-private sectors. The private sector also could take part in conserving while also earning incomes and profits from utilizing heritage (Boniotto, 2023). For example, business owners and managers have revitalized old buildings into business places, such as hotels, restaurants, and museums and galleries. However, there is a small segment of communities that works on conserving and interpreting heritage in their own neighborhoods or towns or cities. These community groups' orientation is not merely profits and usually based on care for the sustainability of their heritage. For example, Indonesia has seen a growth of heritage interpretation community groups since the turn of the 21st century (Patria, 2021). These groups mostly were initiated and managed by young individuals being passionate about heritage in their own living places and creating a range of activities, from walking tours to diverse arts and cultural classes catered for visitors. Such initiatives possibly have contributed to the local growth of heritage tourism and the sustainability of local heritage environments.

This study explores how heritage-based social enterprise in the old town of Kotagede, Yogyakarta, Indonesia manage and promote their heritage to the community at large. It seeks to understand this group's roles in sustaining their local heritage environments through their heritage-based programs and activities. Aside from filling the gap in the topic, findings of this study will shed a light into the practices of social entrepreneurship in sustaining their heritage environments. In relation to the Sustainable Development Goals, this study will contribute to the aspect of sustainable cities and communities. The findings generated in this study potentially will help other similar social enterprises in Indonesia in managing their own group, which eventually will contribute to the longevity of their heritage environments as well as to the wellbeing of the communities who live in the environment. Thus, this study is in line with the goal of sustainable cities and communities in creating inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities and human settlements.

Literature Review

Within the academic world, conscious heritage conservation has been a discourse among academics from various disciplines, such as from archaeology to urban planning to architecture to tourism. Studies of heritage tourism have expanded in line with the growth of heritage tourism industrialization in the 19th and 20th century, preceded by the Western countries that firstly has led in this sector. However, little is known about the roles of social enterprises organized by grassroot communities in conserving and interpreting heritage. Previous studies about social entrepreneurship working on cultural heritage brought up the cases of formal social enterprises rather than community-based ones (for examples, Consiglio, 2021; Chan, et al., 2021; Kummitha, et al., 2021; Aquino, 2022; Scuotto, et al., 2023). Perhaps a few of the closest topics to this study are those that generated insights into how global cultural tourism and social entrepreneurship provide tourism destinations for community development (Li, et al., 2022) and into the suggestion that entrepreneurial orientation be extended into sociopreneurial with additional aspects including preservation and communality (Manik, et al., 2022). This gap has provided ample opportunities for scholars to dig deeper into the ongoing phenomenon, including that in Indonesia. Understanding about how local heritage-based social enterprises have contributed to the sustainability of their work and, thus, local heritage environment will be beneficial to the aspiring groups of similar work that are still growing in number in Indonesia.

Heritage is anything passed down from one generation to the next, that embodies collective value of a community in its social, historical, or cultural dimension (Throsby, 1997). Based on the form, it comes in three general groups, tangible or intangible or a combination of both. In terms of type, it is commonly grouped into natural, cultural, and the combination of natural and cultural heritage, known as cultural landscape. Heritage is conserved for its values or significance that are important or beneficial to humans and the environments, such as scientific and educational value, environmental diversity, artistic and architectural merit, revenue generation, nostalgia, and nationalism (Timothy, 2021). Humans decide the values and significance of heritage. Thus, heritage is a social construct due to collective humans' assessment of its significance and decision on selecting which heritage should be protected and conserved, be it on a local, regional, national, or global level (Ashworth & Larkham, 1994; Dormaels, 2013).

Conscious heritage conservation was initiated by the municipality of Tarentum (now Tarento) in southern Italy where the local government began to conserve Greek antiquities in the city (Aygen, 2012). The concept of heritage conservation rooted in the Western cultures that emphasizes on the importance of retaining the authenticity of the materials used in heritage structures (Tom, 2013; Forster, et al., 2019). In the development, Western-approach conservation method dispersed to many parts of the world, more particularly in the Western world that include Northern America and Australia (ICCROM in Jokilehto, 2005). In Asia, approaching the end of the 20th century, question about the suitability of Western approach to heritage conservation in the region began to rise. In the East, approach to heritage conservation is based on a view of life as a cyclic process and on ideas of the fundamental characteristics of impermanence (Winter, 2014; Winter, 2014). For example, in Japan, people tear down and rebuild a heritage building by applying the same techniques and using similar materials every 20 years (Chapagain, 2013). After a series of discourses, and after the Nara Charter was issued in 1994, the global heritage societies accepted the Eastern approach to heritage conservation, contributing to the universal heritage conservation approach.

In Indonesia, the laws and regulation on heritage conservation were initially set by the Dutch East Indies administration in The Monument of Act 1931 and inherited to the present day with some adjustment. The latest updated Undang-undang Republik Indonesia No. 10 Tahun 2011 tentang Benda Cagar Budaya (the Act of the Republic of Indonesia Number 10 Year 2011 regarding Protected Cultural Heritage) consists of the regulations on heritage and heritage conservation, such as definitions, groupings, and use of heritage. In this act, heritage refers to protected heritage or Cagar Budaya, and is defined as cultural heritage in intangible form that includes protected heritage goods (Benda Cagar Budaya), protected heritage structure (Struktur Cagar Budaya), protected heritage site (Situs Cagar Budaya), protected heritage area (Kawasan Cagar Budaya) that are situated on the land or in the water

and needs to be conserved for its important values to history, knowledge, education, religion, and/or culture through a designation process. The law protects inherited objects from diverse periods of the Indonesian cultures and history, selecting those that have values on the local, regional, national, and even universal level, such as those included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The law categorizes heritage into several groups, including heritage goods, buildings, structures, sites, and area.

Communities conserve heritage for its significance by taking into account the values that represent numerous eras and aspects of human civilization. Such significance often becomes attraction for people to travel and visit the heritage, which eventually builds the foundation of heritage tourism. However, it is noteworthy that heritage conservation and heritage tourism are two separate and different fields, and that both can complement and support each other. Heritage conservation provides attractions for visitors who come to see, learn, and enjoy the heritage. On the other side, when carefully planned and managed, heritage tourism has the potential to generate incomes and profits that can be used to conserve heritage. The latter is beneficial to heritage conservation due to the costs required to protect, maintain, and develop the heritage. Recent studies suggested that the benefits of heritage conservation should also be emphasized on the people, such as the occupants and visitors, rather than only on the heritage objects (Aureli, et al., 2023). Despite this symbiotic relationship is not immune from issues and challenges, the relationship is still possible provided meticulous planning and coordination among diverse heritage tourism stakeholders are undertaken. Recent studies suggested that the benefits of heritage conservation should also be emphasized on the people, such as the occupants and visitors, rather than only on the heritage objects (Aureli, et al., 2023).

The planned work of heritage conservation and promotion, and sometimes interpretation, in Indonesia can be credited to these local social enterprises. Social entrepreneurship (SE) emerges with an aim to find solutions to social problems that often are not taken care of by the government or private businesses (Mair & Marti, 2006; Pless, 2012). Throughout times, the communities around the globe have been facing diverse issues, such as those related to employment, health and social care services, housing, crime, deprivation and social exclusion (Haugh, 2005). SE emerges to provide goods and services to solve the social issues without government or private sector's involvement. What differentiates SE from the common enterprises is usually the use of profits. While profit-oriented business entities make and use the profits as the company's assets, SE multiplies the profits to heighten its impacts on the communities. In this case, locally initiated, heritage-base social enterprises have taken their part in raising community's awareness of local heritage which, in turn, will impact on the heritage environment sustainability.

Managing an organization, including social enterprises, that works on achieving its goals and objectives requires an effective application of functional areas of business. The four functional areas of business include the operations or production, marketing, human resources, and finance (Taylor, 2004). Production, which comes in the form of either good or service, refers to the production of values embodied in a good or service to solve the community's problem. Marketing is the communication process that links a specific product to a target market. Human resources relate to the peoples in the production process, whereas finance is the monetary resource that are used to manage and operate the functions of the organization. However, most of the SEs in this context in Indonesia adopt a less rigid concept of business management (Patria, 2021).

METHOD

This paper was based on a research question to how heritage-based social enterprises in Indonesia manage and sustain their work, which indirectly impact on the sustainability of the local heritage environment. For this study, a heritage-based social enterprise in Kotagede, Yogyakarta, Indonesia was selected for its status as one of the earliest known social enterprise of its type. The enterprise, called KHT in this study, initially was started in 1998 and has worked mainly on raising community's awareness of upkeeping local heritage through a variety of educational and recreational programs and activities. The enterprise is based near the site of an old sultanate, Mataram, which flourished between end of the 16th and mid 17th centuries and left a royal complex which includes a palace, a cemetery, and a mosque, among others. Aside from the royal heritage, Kotagede also is famous for its silverware industry that has been existing since the late 16th century. These physical heritage manifestations have given a distinct characteristic to the Kotagede neighborhood, enriching the lives of local community's traditions.

To obtain data that will answer the research question, the researchers selected the founder of KHT in the first place for her understanding and experiences with founding and managing the enterprise. The founder was subsequently asked to select other group members who meet the following criteria, including any person involved in the work of the organization who has sound knowledge about the history and the management of the organization. The persons may be other founders, organizing team members, and executing team members,

regardless of how long they have been involved in the organization. Based on the founder’s recommendation, other four members of KHT were included as part of the respondents for this study. In total, five respondents were involved in the study and respectively named R1 (Respondent 1), R2, R3, R4, and R5.

To collect data from these respondents, a focus group discussion (FGD) was organized in Kotagede in July 6, 2024. A three-hour interview was held at a revitalized coffeeshop in the neighborhood and audio recorded using a cell phone. Transcriptions of the recorded interviews were finished in early August 2024, followed by coding. In validating the data, the authors relied on their own experiences, knowledge, and judgement. The researcher came up with a number of predetermined codes to generate answers to the research question. Following this step, the researchers tagged parts of transcriptions that are in accordance with the definition of each code. After the tagged texts under the same codes were placed and combined into themes, a summary for each theme was written which builds the foundation of this research. The writing of the findings and analysis of this paper was done by inserting some tagged texts to support important points in the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

KHT was founded in 1998 by a fresh graduate of Tourism, who initially helped her mother organize a tour for a visiting USAID group in the neighborhood. The visit aims at gaining knowledge of the visiting group members and included a heritage walk of the area and a traditional luncheon as part of local cultural experience. Departing from this experience, the founder was then inspired to continue organizing heritage walks and cultural activities for visitors. During the evolving process, the founder founded a community group with a main goal to raise local community’s awareness and appreciation toward local heritage while also promoting it to the visitors. Between 1998 and 2006, the founder was active organizing a variety of activities, such as heritage walks that catered mainly to visiting guests, mainly students of international schools and college students of local and national universities. However, due to the earthquake that hit many parts of Yogyakarta in 2006, the group went inactive until 2010. In 2012, the group re-emerged with more varied programs, such as traditional dance, Gamelan music, and Batik classes. Since then, ninety five percent of the guests, predominantly foreign tourists, came through a tour operator. In organizing the activities, the founder involves some local community members. Some of the incomes were distributed to help support group members who are involved in the execution of the programs, and some are used to fund the management and operation of the group.

KHT’s range of activities are focused in the old town of Kotagede, which is situated southeast of the center of Yogyakarta. It was the site where the old Mataram Sultanate was founded in 1577 and reigned until it was splat in 1675 into two sultanates, Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat in the present-day Yogyakarta city and Surakarta in Solo. The area includes the sultanate compound, which consists of a palatial complex and a cemetery, and a mosque built in the late 16th century. Aside from this, the area also consists of residential houses situated in a maze of alleys, silverwork industrial neighborhood from the early 1900s, and the oldest public market in Yogyakarta. The area now is a mix of residential houses and home industries of a variety of products, commercial buildings, as well as historic sites and structures. The buildings in Kotagede can be categorized into three, including the palatial complex from the 16th century, traditional Javanese house, or Joglo, with mixed influences of Hindu or Islamic (18th to 19th century), and Kalang houses that combined European and local styles (early 1900s).

Findings of the FGD revealed that KHT does not adopt a formal, common business type of management. The founder, R1, admitted that she runs the activities spontaneously without using or applying a specific type of business model. She considered the group as a social enterprise aiming at educating local community about their own culture, traditions, historic and heritage sites, as well as about entrepreneurship. R1 and the other respondents believe that the values of local cultural heritage should be conserved and they can be developed simultaneously by applying social entrepreneurship. She also indicated that local community should have entrepreneurship spirit and skills.

The FGD also revealed a number of findings that can be grouped into the four areas of business functions, including operations or production, marketing, human resources, and finance. The aspects in production include creation of various tourism programs, heightening of local uniqueness, combination of social and business orientation of the organization, and careful treatment of local cultural resources. In marketing, finding showed that focus on the target market’s needs was essential. In human resources, aspects included passion, involvement of local community members, community education about local cultures and entrepreneurship, regeneration of human resources, and synergies among stakeholders. Meanwhile, finance required provision of

incentives for participating community members to help sustain community's loyalty to the group's undertakings.

Discussion

Operations / Production

In sustaining their social enterprise, respondents believe it is important to create a variety of products. Such variety can reach a broader range of market and help the group sustain its work compared to producing a limited number of products. Even though KHT's focus on the theme of heritage, it still can diversify its product, such as from heritage walks to diverse art and cultural activities and programs, including traditional dances, Gamelan music, and Batik classes.

KHT definitely is not the only social enterprise of its kind in the region of Yogyakarta and Indonesia on a national level. Thus, competition is unavoidable. Even though the founder admitted that she runs the enterprise in a less rigid manner compared to other formal business units in general, she feels it is imperative for KHT to heighten the uniqueness of the neighborhood. With the significance of local heritage as one of the well-known and influential kingdoms in Indonesia, that is the old Sultanate of Mataram, KHT can promote it as a prime highlight of their products. This inherited value will sustain even amid the unpredictable dynamics of the future. Respondents also were aware of the importance of combining the social and business orientation of the enterprise. Considering that the group will not be able to sustain their work based on social-oriented purposes alone, respondents feel that they also need to take the business aspect into account, as R4 said, I think it is fine to combine idealism and business. In fact, I think it is good because you can run a business with a value. And it is a good intention. And, who knows, you can affect others [local community members]. At least others will have the same thinking or sensitivity that this is the heritage that exists in Kotagede. Because not everyone is willing to or able to do it. So, I think it will be fine to get benefits from it. Because if it is not used, people will not care. But if we can take the benefits, God's willing, it will be good.

Thus, income and profit generation also are perceived important to sustain the group and its work. The last finding related to product is the notion of not to over-commercialize the heritage products. This means there should be careful planning and treatment of the heritage resources in the neighborhood. Creation and demonstration of heritage products should not degrade the values of the heritage. If there is an overuse of local heritage and that degrades the values of the heritage, either tangible or intangible, heritage resources will not sustain in the future due to the degradation, as R4 stated, “But there is one thing we need to pay attention to as an actor, perhaps not to overexploit [heritage]. That's also what we protect. So, we don't create something artificial. So, everything should be as authentic as possible. That's what we protect. The product, the resources, everything, as a matter of fact.”

Marketing

From the market aspect, respondents are fully aware of the importance of linking a specific product to the right target market. For example, KHT targets students of international schools and college students of particular disciplines, such as architecture and urban planning, as the target market of their walking tours, where tour participants have the opportunities to learn about the history of Kotagede and the socio-cultural aspect of local residents. Other products such as art and cultural classes are more targeted at students in general, both domestic and international, and international visitors that seeks cultural experiences in the area, as R1 exemplified, “So, I consulted with a travel agency, what if we organize Batik classes... if we could offer them to our guests. So, they [a travel agency] sent us guests [to experience Batik making]. Because of that, we sustained.” The ability to deliver specific products to the right target market can help a sustainable tourism program in the area.

Human resources

To deliver quality products and experiences to the visitors, it is key that local community members are equipped with a sound knowledge about local history and cultural heritage. Such knowledge is essential as it could help sustain heritage management (Dai, 2021). In addition, to create quality products and determine the right target market, knowledge about entrepreneurship and its benefits also is considered to play a major part in sustaining a social enterprise, such as implied by R2, In fact, some of the community members [of Kotagede] already began to [be aware of], “Oh, we could actually sell this”. Something like that. For example, Gamelan, then dances. Some senior community members participated in dance groups and said, “Oh, this one can be performed”. Then there is the Jemparingan program. It also could be sold. So, we need a community awareness program which *op toh sing iso didol* (‘could be done’ in Javanese language). As the number of visitors to Kotagede increases, they [community members] can enjoy the cake (reap the benefit).

However, disseminating knowledge about entrepreneurship is still a challenge as local community still feels unfamiliar with the enterprise cultures. To help organize the work of the enterprise, it requires a group of passionate people to be involved in the work. KHT's founder involves some local community members as co-executors of the programs and activities. The varied expertise required to organize a variety of products have been helpful in sustaining the growth of the group.

In addition to the important factor to the human resources aspect, regeneration also plays a major part in sustaining the group. This is obvious since regeneration is inevitable in many aspects of humans' livings. Passing down the knowledge and expertise from previous generation to the next ones within the context of social entrepreneurship should be continuously done. However, and overall speaking, perhaps passion is the most fundamental aspect of a social enterprise. Experiences have shown that personal passion can function as the fuel to an everlasting undertaking.

Finance

Last but not less important in managing a social enterprise is the financial aspect. Similar to other profit-oriented organizations, a social enterprise also requires financial resource to run the organization and its work. First, it is needed to purchase the materials included as part of the production. Second, it helps to maintain people's loyalty, in this case is the community members who are involved in the execution of programs and activities, such as told by R2: There's a slogan circulated among the community that perhaps is funny, *ngurip-ngurip sing nguripi* (a Javanese saying that means, 'provide a living to those who provide a living'). That means 'provide a living to those who provide a living. So, for example, if the activities cannot be a source of living, sometimes they became *lokro* (losing the spirit). It means losing the spirit. But if the activities could generate additional income, they enter into the spirit of them.

Past studies employing exchange theory showed that in most cases of community-based tourism, financial benefits are fundamental to the community's sustainable involvement in a tourism development (e.g. Gursoy, 2019; Corral & Dominguez, 2011; Corral, 2012). As an end note, despite many results in this study are concerned with the sustainability of the management aspect of KHT, they indirectly determine the sustainability of the local heritage environment. By creating demands in local heritage tourism, it shows to the stakeholders about the varied benefits that heritage can generate. Such demands also will encourage local communities and other related parties to maintain and enhance the quality of the physical elements of the heritage environment as well as improving the living quality of the local residents in terms of economy and socio-culture.

In this section, the findings should be separated by discussion. Findings or research results are not raw data, but data that has been processed/analyzed by certain methods. The discussion is the result of interpretation of data analysis, if necessary, linked to relevant scientific theories/concepts in the literature review. Findings and discussions must answer the formulation of the problem and have the impact of new knowledge. The contents of the findings and discussion can be in the form of interpretation of the results of the discussion.

CONCLUSION

As the Indonesian society is becoming more industrial and urban, the need and interest in conserving both tangible and intangible heritage also have risen. Since around the turn of the 21st century, community-initiated social enterprises have been flourishing as an attempt to balance between progression and conservation of selected values from the past. KHT in Yogyakarta emerged as an independent agent of heritage education to the community at large, both residents and visitors, through a variety of educational and recreational programs and activities. As an independent body, it has faced the same managerial issues that many other similar organizations have. This study attempted to explore factors that have contributed to the sustainability of the enterprise and their work. The determinant factors are grouped into four, namely production, marketing, human resources, and finance. The study showed that a variety of products that promote local uniqueness, considerate planning in using local heritage resources, focus on the target market's needs, involvement and regeneration of organizing group members, monetary compensation for the organizing committee, synergies among stakeholders, and community education have contributed to the sustainability of the organization and its works. However, passion is perhaps the most important aspect, which forms the foundation of the group's work. These determinant factors can be a contribution to the body of knowledge pertaining to heritage-based social enterprise in Indonesia and be beneficial to other aspiring groups that seeks a way to sustain themselves.

It is noteworthy that the group’s work also impacts the local environment. Such environment is not limited to the physical aspect but also includes the wellbeing of the local community, in that this group’s work has contributed variably to the financial and socio-cultural aspects of local community’s living.

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