

The Potential and Challenges of Local-Potential-Based Community Development among Parking Workers at East Purwokerto Traditional Market

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ABSTRACT

Parking workers are part of the informal sector that supports the daily operation of traditional markets, yet they are often treated merely as objects of regulation rather than as a local community with development potential. This study aims to analyze the local potential and challenges of community development among parking workers in Pasar Wage, East Purwokerto, using a *locality development* approach. The research employed a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through field observation, in-depth interviews with five parking workers who had worked in the market for more than three years, and a review of relevant documents and literature. Data were analyzed thematically by linking field findings with concepts of community development, locality development, and social capital. The findings show that parking workers possess significant local potential in the form of deep knowledge of market rhythms, long work experience, practical situational judgment, and strong social networks with traders and market visitors. These assets allow them to contribute not only to vehicle arrangement but also to market order, comfort, and security. However, such potential has not been optimally developed due to limited policy recognition, the lack of empowerment programs, weak access to social protection, and the absence of sustained institutional mentoring. This study concludes that parking workers should be recognized as part of the market community with valuable local assets and social knowledge. Community development based on local potential can therefore become a strategy to improve their welfare while strengthening a more participatory, inclusive, and sustainable governance of traditional markets.

Keywords: community development, parking workers, local potential, traditional market, locality development

ABSTRAK

Pekerja parkir merupakan bagian dari sektor informal yang menopang aktivitas pasar tradisional, tetapi keberadaannya sering diposisikan hanya sebagai objek penertiban, bukan sebagai komunitas lokal yang memiliki potensi untuk dikembangkan. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis potensi lokal dan tantangan pengembangan masyarakat pekerja parkir di Pasar Wage Purwokerto Timur dengan menggunakan pendekatan *locality development*. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data diperoleh melalui observasi lapangan, wawancara mendalam terhadap lima pekerja parkir yang telah bekerja lebih dari tiga tahun, serta telaah dokumen dan literatur relevan. Analisis data dilakukan secara tematik dengan mengaitkan temuan lapangan dengan konsep pengembangan masyarakat, *locality development*, dan modal sosial. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pekerja parkir memiliki potensi lokal yang signifikan berupa pengetahuan mendalam mengenai ritme pasar, pengalaman kerja yang panjang, kemampuan membaca situasi lapangan, serta jaringan sosial yang kuat dengan pedagang dan pengunjung. Potensi tersebut memungkinkan mereka berperan tidak hanya dalam pengaturan kendaraan, tetapi juga dalam menjaga ketertiban, kenyamanan, dan rasa aman di lingkungan pasar. Akan tetapi, pengembangan potensi tersebut belum berlangsung optimal karena masih terbatasnya pengakuan kebijakan, minimnya program pemberdayaan, lemahnya akses terhadap perlindungan sosial, dan belum adanya pendampingan kelembagaan yang berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pekerja parkir perlu diposisikan sebagai bagian dari komunitas pasar yang memiliki aset sosial dan pengetahuan lokal. Dengan demikian, pengembangan masyarakat berbasis potensi lokal dapat menjadi strategi untuk meningkatkan kesejahteraan pekerja parkir sekaligus memperkuat tata kelola pasar tradisional yang lebih partisipatif, inklusif, dan berkelanjutan.

Kata kunci: pengembangan masyarakat, pekerja parkir, potensi lokal, pasar tradisional, *locality development*

Introduction

Traditional markets are socio-economic institutions whose functions extend far beyond that of mere sites of transaction. In the context of Javanese towns and cities, traditional markets have long served as spaces of social interaction, arenas for cultural reproduction, and nodes of people's economic life. Aliyah, Setioko, and Pradoto (2017) argue that traditional markets possess both spatial and non-spatial strategic functions, namely as socio-cultural as well as socio-economic spaces. Traditional markets, therefore, should be understood not simply as arenas of trade, but as social ecosystems that bring together a wide range of formal and informal occupational groups (Aliyah, Setioko, & Pradoto, 2017).

Within such ecosystems, informal-sector workers play an important role. The informal economy in Indonesia continues to constitute a substantial part of the national economic structure. The World Bank reports that Indonesia's informal economy contributed, on average, around 36 per cent of GDP between 2011 and 2019, while the ILO has continued to promote the agenda of transition from informality to formality through Recommendation No. 204 (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank, 2023; ILO, 2015). In development practice, however, the magnitude of this contribution often stands in stark contrast to the level of protection and recognition afforded to its workers.

One informal group that frequently escapes scholarly and policy attention is that of parking workers in traditional markets. They are usually viewed merely as technical personnel responsible for arranging vehicles, or even as part of the problem of urban disorder. Yet within market settings, parking workers play a direct role in maintaining visitor circulation, fostering a sense of safety, and supporting the comfort of

economic transactions. In Banyumas, market parking services have even been incorporated into the official regulatory framework: *Perda Kabupaten Banyumas Nomor 1 Tahun 2024* includes Pasar Wage within the regional parking tariff structure. This indicates that market parking is not a peripheral matter, but rather part of the governance of public services in market areas.

Pasar Wage in East Purwokerto is one of the important people's markets in Banyumas. Official statistical documents of Banyumas record the existence of the Pasar Wage Market Unit as a government market unit, while East Purwokerto Subdistrict itself is documented as having four markets in regional statistical publications (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Banyumas, 2017). The position of Pasar Wage as a vibrant market located in an urban area makes it a dense and complex site of interaction, thereby placing parking workers in a strategically important role in sustaining the smooth operation of market activities.

Even so, the contribution of parking workers has rarely been examined through the lens of community development. Studies on traditional markets and the informal sector more often focus on traders, porters, or the competitiveness of traditional markets vis-à-vis modern retail, while parking workers appear only as a secondary element in narratives of public order. As a consequence, the local potential they possess—such as knowledge of market rhythms, the ability to read on-site situations, social ties with traders, and long-term work experience—has not been positioned as a community asset that can be developed. Yet within the locality development approach, local communities are understood to possess internal resources that may become the basis for more participatory and sustainable development.

Against this background, this article aims to analyse the local potential and the challenges of

community development among parking workers at Pasar Wage, East Purwokerto. More specifically, it seeks to answer three questions. First, what forms of local potential do parking workers possess as a market community? Second, what challenges prevent that potential from developing optimally? Third, how can the locality development approach be used to formulate a more inclusive and sustainable direction for the development of the parking workers' community?

Theoretical Framework

Community Development

Community development is a process of social change designed to enhance a community's capacity to manage resources, solve problems, and improve its quality of life in a participatory manner. Within this approach, community members are not positioned as passive recipients, but as subjects who possess knowledge, experience, and the capacity to determine the direction of change they seek. Ife (2016) stresses that community development must be grounded in social justice, participation, and the strengthening of citizens' capacity to act upon their own problems, while Adi (2015) emphasises the importance of participatory community intervention based on the real needs of society (Ife, 2016; Adi, 2015).

In urban contexts, community development is particularly relevant to informal-sector groups that often make substantial contributions while remaining in vulnerable positions. Parking workers may be seen as a working community with shared social relations, collective experience, and particular patterns of adaptation. For that reason, they cannot be understood adequately as isolated individual workers, but rather as a social group whose capacities and bargaining position may be strengthened.

The Locality Development Approach

Locality development is rooted in the model of

community organisation developed by Rothman. This approach emphasises that sustainable community development must be based on citizen participation, the identification of local potential, the strengthening of community leadership, and inclusive decision-making processes. In this model, the local area is not merely a geographical site, but a social space in which shared identities, relationships, and interests are formed. Rothman's classic synthesis shows that locality development is the approach most closely aligned with the idea of community development itself, namely the strengthening of community capacity through the direct involvement of citizens in solving their own problems (Rothman, 2008).

In the context of traditional markets, this approach is highly relevant because the market is a local space that brings together multiple communities: traders, buyers, porters, managers, and parking workers. Parking workers possess a strong attachment to the market space, and their development should therefore be built upon the relationships and potential that emerge from the market environment itself, rather than through an approach based solely on control and regulation.

Local Potential and Social Capital

Local potential encompasses all forms of resources that are embedded in a community, both material and non-material. In this study, the local potential of parking workers is primarily examined through the concept of social capital. Putnam (2000) conceptualises social capital as the networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. In informal worker communities, social capital often becomes the principal mechanism through which workers survive, resolve conflicts, and cope with economic uncertainty.

For parking workers, social capital may take the form of solidarity among workers, trust from traders, and good relations with market visitors. In addition, another equally important form of

local asset is local knowledge. Knowledge of peak hours, traffic flow patterns, customer characteristics, and the social dynamics of the market constitutes a resource that is not always visible, but is crucial to the effectiveness of their work.

The Informal Sector and Structural Vulnerability

Keith Hart and subsequent literature have demonstrated that the informal sector cannot be understood merely as a residual category of the formal economy, but rather as a sphere of work with its own logic, networks, and survival strategies (Hart, 2020). At the same time, vulnerability remains one of its defining features: irregular income, weak labour protection, and minimal social security. ILO reports on decent work in the informal economy emphasise that informal workers frequently experience deficits in protection, whether in relation to job security, income stability, or social protection (ILO, 2015; ILO, 2020).

Thus, any analysis of parking workers must locate their local potential and social capital within the broader context of structural vulnerability. This is precisely where community development becomes crucial: not merely to increase individual capacity, but also to improve the social position of parking workers within the governance of the market.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study design. This approach was chosen because the study aims to understand in depth the experiences, potential, and challenges faced by the parking workers' community at one specific location, namely Pasar Wage, East Purwokerto. The focus of the study is not statistical generalisation, but social meaning and community dynamics in a local context.

The research informants consisted of five

parking workers who had worked at Pasar Wage for more than three years. This criterion was adopted because such informants were considered to possess sufficient knowledge of market rhythms, patterns of interaction among actors, and changes taking place in their working environment. Data were collected through three techniques: field observation, in-depth interviews, and literature review.

Field observation was conducted to examine directly the activities of parking workers, the patterns of social interaction in parking areas, their relationships with traders and visitors, and their position within the wider market ecosystem. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore their work experiences, perceptions of their role, sources of vulnerability, forms of solidarity, and their views regarding the possibilities of community development. Literature review was used to strengthen the theoretical analysis and situate the field findings within a broader context.

Data were analysed thematically through the stages of reading the data as a whole, identifying key themes, linking the findings to the concepts of community development and locality development, and then constructing an interpretation. Data credibility was maintained through methodological triangulation, namely by comparing interview results with field observations and relevant literature.

Findings and Discussion

Parking Workers as an Informal Community that Sustains Market Functions

The findings show that parking workers at Pasar Wage are not merely technical operators responsible for arranging vehicles. In their daily practice, they help sustain order in the market area, contribute to a sense of safety, and ensure the smooth movement of visitors. This role becomes particularly important because a traditional market is a dense, dynamic space that

often experiences high pressure during certain hours. Within such a setting, parking workers function as actors who mediate between the needs of market users and the constraints of the available space.

Even so, their socio-economic position remains precarious. As informal-sector workers, their income depends on the level of market activity and is not supported by the certainty of a monthly wage or robust social protection. This situation is consistent with the broader pattern of informal labour vulnerability emphasised by the ILO and by studies of informality in Indonesia. In other words, parking workers make a tangible contribution to the market while continuing to labour under unstable conditions (ILO, 2015; International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank, 2023).

Local Knowledge as a Primary Asset

One of the strongest findings of this study is that parking workers possess deep local knowledge of the market. This knowledge includes an understanding of peak hours, patterns of vehicle entry and exit, locations that frequently generate congestion, and the general behaviour of traders and visitors. Such knowledge is not acquired through formal training, but through years of work experience and direct immersion in the rhythms of the market.

From a community development perspective, such local knowledge constitutes a highly significant community asset. It enables parking workers to perform functions that go beyond merely directing vehicles. In fact, they possess the practical capacity to contribute to the governance of market space, the organisation of circulation, and even the prevention of minor conflicts that arise during busy periods. Yet this asset has never been transformed into formally recognised institutional capacity.

Strong Social Capital, but Still Informal in Character

The study also found that social capital among

parking workers is relatively strong. Their solidarity is visible in practices of mutual assistance, information-sharing, and the maintenance of balance in parking operations. Their relationships with traders are also generally cooperative. Daily interactions generate reciprocal trust, such that parking workers are often regarded as part of the life of the market rather than as outsiders who appear only temporarily.

This social capital is important because it serves as a source of occupational stability and a means of reducing conflict. In Putnam's terms, such networks and trust form the basis of collective cooperation (Putnam, 2000). However, at Pasar Wage, this social capital still functions informally and has not yet been converted into a community organisation or workers' forum with bargaining power. As a result, although solidarity exists, it has not yet become a sufficiently strong collective force to advocate for recognition, protection, or capacity enhancement.

The Principal Challenge: Minimal Recognition and the Dominance of a Regulatory Approach

The field findings suggest that the greatest challenge lies not in the absence of potential, but in the absence of structural recognition of parking workers as part of the market community worthy of development. In market governance practice, parking workers are still more often seen through an administrative and regulatory lens. This approach renders them subjects to be "managed," rather than partners to be meaningfully involved.

Such a condition narrows the prospects for locality development. Yet in this approach, local development ought precisely to begin with the actors who live and work within that space. As long as parking workers are not recognised as subjects of market development, the local assets they possess will continue to be utilised functionally, but never developed in ways that improve their welfare and strengthen their

community capacity.

The Absence of Empowerment Programmes and Sustained Mentoring

Another clear obstacle is the absence of empowerment programmes specifically targeting parking workers. There is no evidence of basic training in public service, communication, occupational safety, conflict management, or community organisational strengthening. This lack of sustained accompaniment causes the knowledge and experience they possess to remain individual skills rather than becoming collective community capacity.

From the standpoint of community development, this indicates that empowerment has not yet taken place. Parking workers certainly possess practical abilities, but they have not been facilitated in ways that would strengthen their position collectively. As a result, they continue to survive through everyday informal strategies, without sufficient opportunity either to improve their welfare or to expand their role in market governance.

The Relevance of the Locality Development Approach

The locality development approach offers a more productive way of understanding parking workers. Rather than treating them as a problem of order, this perspective regards them as part of a local community that possesses assets and can be involved in market development. In the context of Pasar Wage, the involvement of parking workers could be directed towards stronger participation in the management of parking areas, the formulation of more participatory operational rules, basic training in public service, and the establishment of a parking workers' community forum.

In this way, community development would not focus solely on increasing individual income, but also on strengthening social position and

collective capacity. This is crucial because the problem of parking workers concerns not only economics, but also recognition, access, and their place within the structure of market governance.

Implications: From Marginal Group to Strategic Partner in Market Governance

If the local potential of parking workers were developed seriously, they could be transformed from a marginal group into a strategic partner in the governance of traditional markets. Their local knowledge could be used to formulate more efficient parking arrangements. Their social capital could become the basis for cooperative mechanisms with traders and market managers. Their work experience could be developed into more professional service capacity.

Such a transformation would benefit both sides simultaneously. For parking workers, it would create opportunities for improved welfare, recognition, and capacity. For the traditional market, it would create opportunities for more participatory, orderly, and user-oriented governance. Thus, the community development of parking workers is not merely a narrow issue affecting one occupational group, but part of the broader strengthening of people's market governance.

Conclusion

This study shows that parking workers at Pasar Wage, East Purwokerto, form an important part of the traditional market ecosystem and possess significant local potential. This potential is visible in their in-depth knowledge of market dynamics, long work experience, and strong social capital with fellow workers, traders, and market visitors.

However, this potential has not developed optimally. The principal obstacles include the limited policy recognition of parking workers as a local community, the dominance of a

regulatory approach over empowerment, the absence of capacity-building programmes, and weak institutional mentoring. As a result, parking workers remain socially and economically vulnerable, despite their tangible contribution to the orderliness and comfort of the market.

From the perspective of locality development, parking workers should be positioned as subjects of local development. Community development based on local potential can become a relevant strategy for strengthening their capacity, bargaining position, and welfare, while simultaneously supporting more inclusive, participatory, and sustainable governance of traditional markets.

Recommendations

First, local government and market managers need to shift their approach from mere regulation towards the recognition and empowerment of parking workers as part of the market community.

Second, simple yet relevant capacity-building programmes should be developed, such as training in public service, occupational safety, communication, and orderly parking management.

Third, the formation of a forum or community organisation for parking workers needs to be encouraged so that the solidarity that already exists can develop into stronger collective capacity.

Fourth, future research should broaden the perspective by involving market managers, traders, and local government, so that a more comprehensive model of community development for parking workers can be formulated.

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