Local Champions As A Bridge Actor In The Development Of Palembapang Cultural Tourism Village

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Abstract. This research discusses how local champions in the concept of livelihood act as bridge actors in organizing stakeholders. To elaborate on this, Palembapang Village became the subject of the research. The background for choosing this location is that local champions use weak ties to social networks to contact other stakeholders (in this case HMJ Sosiologi FISIP Unila) through social media. Thus, in this study, the analytical knife used is Granovetter's theoretical argument, namely the strength of weak ties in social networks. This academic argumentation describes how organizing patterns are formed through the role of local champions. The research method used is qualitative with an explanatory case study approach. The process of selecting informants is based on specific criteria and is part of this organizational relationship pattern. This series of research activities found that weak ties allow the community to receive new information and innovate their work patterns. Meanwhile, strong ties limit the development and organization of stakeholders in rural communities. This is because the more robust the relationship in the social network, the tendency is to maintain the network to remain stable. This does not happen in weak networks, so it is more flexible.

Keywords: Weak Ties; Stakeholder Organizing; Local champion; Cultural tourism village; bridge actor

1 Introduction

The government has been developing the rural economic ecosystem for a long time through various programs. However, despite these efforts, the results have not been satisfactory, and the systems and mechanisms of rural economic institutions need to be more effective. This has led to further dependence on government assistance and a need for more independence among the rural population [1] [2] [3]. Dependency theory arguments indicate that this can contribute to the creation of a detrimental cycle of dependency that results in the degradation of individual motivation to be self-reliant [4].

Stakeholder organizing plays a vital role in social dynamics. In modern society, various community issues and activities involve various layers and elements of society to achieve

specific interests and goals. In this regard, stakeholder organization is crucial to ensure the implementation of goals, especially in the development sector and community economic development. In sociological studies, stakeholder organizing involves identifying and analyzing the involvement of various parties in a particular issue or project. On the other hand, this pattern also allows one to identify and direct how the relationships and interactions of groups or communities achieve common goals or fight for their respective interests [5]. Institutionalization at the village level is the solution to the weaknesses and limitations of this pattern of community assistance and dependence.

Stakeholder organizing in sociology involves a complex analysis of social interactions and interdependencies between societal actors. The basis of this argumentation leads to the fact that studies related to stakeholder organizing are closely related to social systems theory. In the argumentation of this theory, society is considered a system that forms patterns of behavior in a network of interrelated relationships. In this process, communication is vital in organizing stakeholders [6]. Meanwhile, from the argumentation of social group theory, there is a relevant perspective regarding how groups are formed, operate, and interact in society [7].

The process of organizing stakeholders is a process in which there will also be a series of dialectics in determining common goals [8]. In this process, various conflicts of interest from various parties or stakeholders will be identified in the construction of industrial thinking, usually articulated as a form of conflict. Often, this is influenced or affected by socioeconomic changes in society [9]. So, in this process, effective communication patterns are needed to understand how communication patterns can influence the interaction and understanding of the dependent community with the direction and purpose of the organization to be formed.

The theory of social networks introduced by Granovetter in 1973 has provided a valuable perspective in understanding the organization of stakeholders in sociology. In the argumentation, "weak power" in social networks related to the relationship between groups or individuals has a pattern of ties that are not so close. However, this network pattern has positive implications for expanding social networks while providing opportunities to access new information. If reflected in the context of stakeholder organizing, weak ties in this social network contribute to facilitating collaboration and social change in various issues and projects. Based on this argument, weak ties in social networks have an essential role in organizational development to connect with various parties.

Another suspicion from this point of view is that actors with solid ties have the role of bridge actors. This bridge actor will connect the group with other actors with weakfish in their social network. In the context of this research, Granovetter's argumentation in the social network with weak ties will be used to see how the bridge actor process plays itself in a series of stakeholder organizing in forming a village economic ecosystem based on local culture in Palembapang Village, Kalianda District, South Lampung Regency, Lampung Province.

Various studies have revealed that strong networks in community empowerment have been found to have several benefits. These networks can increase economic efficiency by solving information and commitment problems, leading to better employment opportunities and support for individuals [10]. Social network analysis has been used in community contexts for program evaluation, participatory governance, and health agent selection, among other purposes [11]. Healthy networks are associated with improved community well-being, while unhealthy networks have adverse effects [12]. Strengthening social networks among members of low-income communities has been recommended as a way out of poverty [13].

2 Research Methods

Identifying weak ties in social networks requires depth of information and a research process that requires full engagement. For this reason, this research uses a qualitative method with an explanatory case study approach. The informants in this research were determined directly by identifying interested stakeholders so that the information collected focused more on the research focus. The analysis technique used is data condensation. The series of stages in this method are used to ensure the validity of the research data.

3 Results and Discussion: Inter-Stakeholder Connectivity in Palembapang Village

The pattern of social networks in rural areas allows stakeholders (parties who have an interest or involvement in the issue of Palembapang Village's cultural tourism sector development) to connect in various ways. The most common pattern is the presence of a bridge actor as a bridge that connects stakeholders as a unified work pattern. In sociology, this is known as stakeholder organizing. This series of arguments positions the bridge actor as necessary in building inter-stakeholder connectivity [14].

A bridge actor is a party or individual who liaises between different stakeholder groups. These bridge actors have ties to more than one group, and their role is crucial in facilitating communication, collaboration, and information exchange between these groups [15] [16]. Bridge actors connect people from different backgrounds and strengthen engagement and participation across social networks. In the context of Palembapang Village, the bridge actor is the village head who served from 2017-2023.

In this work pattern, the bridge actor has a role in connecting each stakeholder. One of the most visible roles of the activities carried out by the bridge actor in Palembapang Village is connecting the sai buay community with HMJ (Student Association) Sociology Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Lampung through the social media platform Instagram. Direct messages on this platform invite participation in their cultural activities. The form of participation requested is to form activities to promote their culture in a social branding pattern [17].

The involvement of students in this activity forms a relationship pattern between students and other stakeholders who are based and involved in cultural tourism activities in Palembapang Village [18]. As the Village Head, the bridge actor utilizes his position to access all the stakeholders needed. This pattern is part of and illustrates how a local champion (in the concept of livelihood) has a dominant role in stimulating changes and plans at the village level. In simple terms, the work pattern of the Bridge Actor in developing the Village economic ecosystem in the tourism sector can be described as follows:

Fig. 1. Stakeholder connectedness in Palembapang Village

In other performance patterns, bridge actors can also be played by other actors in organizational patterns, such as the Palembapang Village Government, which has a role as an actor that consolidates the power of stakeholders. This is motivated by the open access to various stakeholders, including local communities, external parties such as district or provincial governments, and non-governmental organizations. Then, members of community organizations, in this case, the sai buay studio and civilization space, have activities in cultural community organizations in Palembapang Village. They have a role as bridge actors because of their connection with other communities and groups in Palembapang Village, especially the youth of Palembapang Village. On the other hand, their role can also be extended to groups outside the village in similar activity patterns. Other stakeholders can also play it.

Specifically, for Palembapang Village, the Bridge Actor is played by a Local Champion who happens to be a former Village Head, Sai Buay Studio coach, village youth leader, as well as a person who has a network up to the supra-village and national levels. In this pattern of roles and backgrounds, the Bridge actor utilizes his social network to organize stakeholders to build a village's economic ecosystem based on local culture. On the other hand, the limitations in his network are not barriers to building and organizing but are used as opportunities to expand and involve more stakeholders. In this case, it can be observed how bridge actors involve students as representatives of the academic world.

In other words, the role of bridge actors is crucial in building strong connections and collaboration between various stakeholder groups. With bridge actors, information and resources can flow more smoothly, and the participation and involvement of all parties in development and planning in rural areas can be enhanced. This supports creating a more cooperative and inclusive social environment, improving rural areas' quality of life and sustainable development.

The action pattern of bridge actors in building connectivity between stakeholders has 3 (three) interaction patterns in building connectivity between stakeholders as an effort to develop connectivity between stakeholders in Palembapang Village, namely:

3.1 Local community interaction

Palembapang Village has several local communities organized or planned by the government or other stakeholders. There is the "Sanggar Sai Buai" community as a representation of the local population that seeks to maintain cultural values so that they can be preserved. On the other hand, a cultural community forum outside of art activities, known as the civilization forum, is also organically formed (observation results). These two things are a form of awareness from the community, especially young people, of their local culture.

Palembapang Village also has a customary group culturally known as "Buay" (kinship based on blood lineage) led by a penyimbang, who is a representation of local leadership [19]. On the other hand, as a representation of the hierarchical pattern of political leadership, in Palembapang Village, there is also a "Clan" led by a "Pangikharan" whose political members are buays within the cultural and administrative territory of the Way Urang Clan (the name of the clan that is the political unit of customary leadership in Palembapang Village). Support from this cultural element plays a vital role for indigenous communities to explore their local culture.

The village government is vital in developing cultural tourism villages in Palembapang [20]. This can be seen from the seriousness of the village government in facilitating community spaces in the form of village policies and regulations. However, in terms of financing, the village government has yet to make a significant contribution due to its ignorance of how to provide this support. The essential consideration is the unavailability of a budget line in the Siskudes (village financial system) issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs for Human Resource Development outside of the LKMD based on statutory regulations.

This connectivity between stakeholders works well informally in the space of routine cultural activities that often occur in the community. This space is formed automatically in line with the implementation of routine cultural activities in indigenous communities and villages [21]. It is identified that this space exists in the form of a people's party, which is implemented once a year and is held on the seventh day after the Eid al-Fitr event for Muslim communities. In addition, other non-formal activity spaces also occur in daily activities such as weddings, circumcisions, syukuran, death events, and other culturally based activities. The daily pattern in this informal space also contributes to regenerating culture for younger generations. As for the formal connectivity space generally takes place in the fórum of village meetings that specifically discuss their local cultural activities.
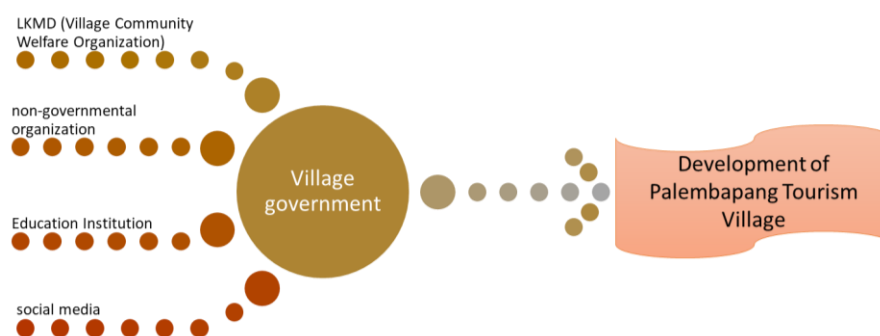

Fig. 2. Structure and pattern of Stakeholder Interaction in Palembapang (source: processed by researchers)

3.2 Social Media as a Means of Community Interaction

Social media plays a vital role in interaction patterns in the digital era. It was recorded in January 2023 that the number of active users with social media accounts in Indonesia was 167 million people, equivalent to 60.4% of the Indonesian population. With an average active time of 3 hours and 18 minutes per day, this figure puts social media activity in Indonesia in the tenth position in the world [22]. In line with this, users of the Instagram social media platform in Indonesia are at 109.3 million as of April 2023. As many as 67.6% are 18-34 years [23]. This makes social media a new interaction space and allows people to connect with other personalities through unlimited networks, including searching for information.

Regarding information seeking, 73% of people in Indonesia obtain information through social media, 22% of whom consider the information they obtain to be reliable (Databoks, 2023). The same thing also happens when they are looking for information related to tourism destinations. Social media occupies the second position as a source of information to find recommendations for tourist destinations. Public trust in social media information is second only to friends and family. Instagram is the most dominating social media in making this decision for prospective travelers. This is a separate space for establishing interaction in the broader community group.

Starting from this series of arguments, young cultural activists in Palembapang village began to utilize the internet network through social media. They do this to introduce their culture to the broader community. Two actors play an important role in this pattern of digital interaction in the cultural community in Palembapang village, namely sanggar sai buay and ruang peradaban. They utilize social media for various daily activities related to the distinctive culture of Palembapang Village. Whatever social media is utilized in the meantime is the Instagram platform as the data description of the results of the documentation study conducted by the researcher. It is a social media that has a vital role in providing recommendations to tourists in determining their destination.
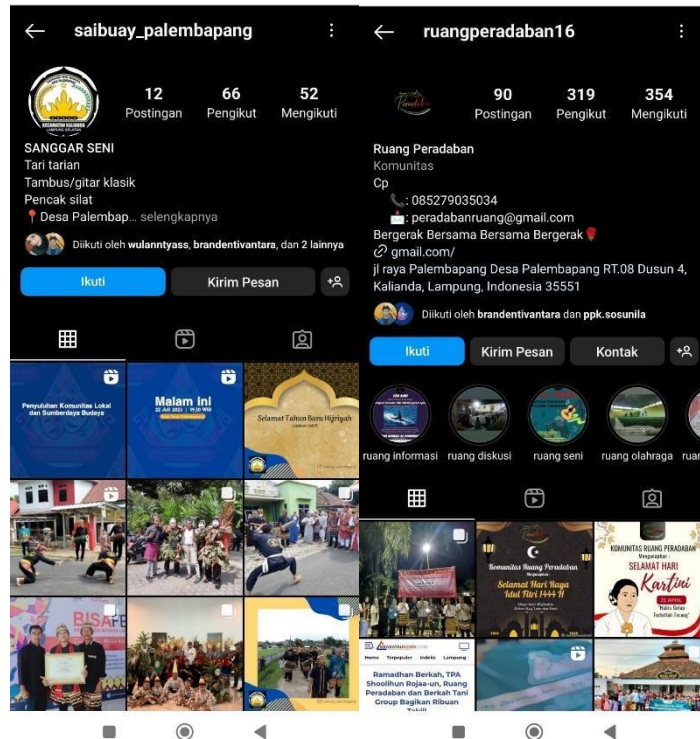
Fig. 3. Social media activities of Palembapang Village Local Community

This series of data and information arguments provides an overview of how local communities build interactions through social media. The biggest problem in this interaction pattern is that local communities still need to be capable of building engagement in their digital interaction patterns. This impacts the pattern of digital activities that need more substantial consistency. These two points of information and discussion are essential for understanding how stakeholders interact and connect in social networks in rural areas to understand the dynamics and needs of local communities. With this understanding, more effective and sustainable measures can be taken to address issues and advance the welfare of rural communities.

Social Media and the Contribution of Networks with Weak Ties (Granovetter) to the Development of Rural Economic Ecosystems. Mark Granovetter (1973), in one of his assumptions on social networks, discusses weak ties in social networks [24]. This concept can be related to stakeholders in rural areas in Palembapang village and can be described as follows:
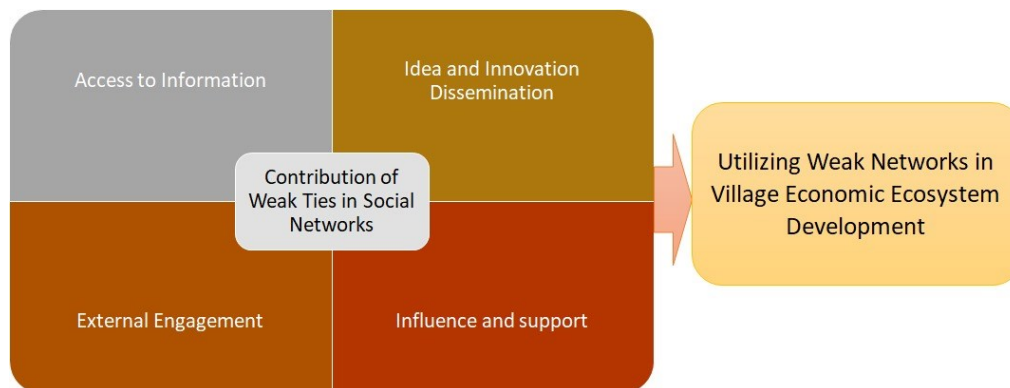
Fig. 4. Factors Affecting the Contribution of Relationship Patterns with Weak Bond Strengths

The figure above shows the four elements that cause weak ties in social networks to contribute to developing village economic ecosystems. Linkages through weak ties allow individuals or groups to access the information they need [25]. This can be illustrated in the village of Palembapang, where obtaining information about training, technical guidance, and assistance carried out by the intertwined government has this bonding pattern. On the other hand, these weak ties also allow cultural tourism activists in Palembapang village to connect with external parties, such as students and academics involved in developing their tourism.

Ignorance is closely related to emotional involvement, providing a pattern of connectivity that leads to public influence and support for what is developed by this village. On the other hand, some actors who have a close relationship with the context need to realize the economic potential of the tourism sector in their area. Others have patterns that move away from culture because they are considered not cool and modern. In this context, the pattern of weak ties has a role in gaining influence and support for the development of local culture. Weak ties in this social network also provide ample space for the community and society to socialize ideas and innovative ideas related to the development of cultural tourism in Palembapang Village. In other words, the introductions and interactions that occur are only casual. In terms of the quality of closeness, this bonding pattern is in a weak position [26]. However, weak ties with parties outside the rural area can also improve social networks.

These weak ties can contribute to information networks unavailable in strong network patterns. This pattern allows communities to obtain information on what is most sought-after in terms of training, sources of capital, consumer needs, and more [27]. In the context of Palembapang Village, the contribution of these ties is their success in identifying student activities in Sukaraja Tanggamus village as a form of cultural promotion. This certainly cannot be obtained from a strong pattern of ties.

Weak ties also provide space for Palembapang Village in terms of spreading ideas. So that in the initial communication process with HMJ Sociology Unila, they can provide an overview of ideas and ideas to provide an image and attractiveness for them. The distance and knowledge of the context provide opportunities for the village to be visited and studied more deeply by students. The arrival of HMJ Sociology is an excellent opportunity for bridge actors to explore the context of potential stakeholders [28].

The pattern carried out in this social network with weak ties provides space for support and appreciation so that it can influence assumptions. This condition is confirmed by the presence

of activities from HMJ Sociology to popularize the culture of Palembapang village. This involvement was realized by creating a joint program in terms of social-cultural branding. This stakeholder participation illustrates a social network work pattern with weak ties to bridge actors in developing and building a village economic ecosystem based on cultural tourism in Palembapang Village. Although Granovetter's social network concept is one of many relevant aspects in the relationship between stakeholders in Palembapang Village. The argumentation of this theory can emphasize how the organizing pattern is carried out in this village.

4 Conclusion

Based on the research results, weak ties in social networks are confirmed to have an essential role in organizing stakeholders. However, this pattern can only occur if a local village champion is a bridge actor as a link between actors and the stakeholders. Bridge actors can also use free interaction patterns on social media to bridge relationships between actors in the organizing process. It was found that strong ties tend to stick to a fixed pattern or experience information stagnation. This prevents new information from entering and being trusted by the group.

Contrary to this, weak ties provide new information and allow for a higher level of trust in assessing and providing input to all stakeholders at the village level. This provides opportunities for growth in situations where organizing could be improved. In other words, weak ties allow the community to receive new information and innovate their work patterns. Meanwhile, strong ties limit the development and organization of stakeholders in rural communities. This is because the more robust the ties in the social network, the tendency is to maintain the network to remain stable. This does not happen in weak networks, so it is more flexible.

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