

Exploring Different Forms of Local Community Participation in the Cultural Heritage Management of Lasem, Indonesia

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Exploring Different Forms of Local Community Participation in the Cultural Heritage Management of Lasem, Indonesia

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Abstract

Lasem, a subdistrict of Indonesia, is renowned for its multiculturalism, which is rooted in various historical events involving different cultural groups: Javanese, Chinese, and Islamic cultures. The different cultural backgrounds left plentiful artifacts and buildings spread throughout Lasem to be subjects of cultural heritage or presumed to be heritage in the present. This has led to various programs related to heritage management, such as heritage registration and database collection, as well as the construction and development of Lasem's 'heritage area.' This study highlights the role of Lasem's local community members and their involvement in managing, using, and developing Lasem's heritage. Many local community members are already aware of preserving Lasem's heritage, despite differences in their backgrounds, skills, and knowledge. Local citizens have created smaller community groups focusing on certain issues and aspects of Lasem's heritage sites. These local NGO groups were created with similar interests among the members. This research employed ethnographic approaches to obtain data and information, including in-depth interviews and participatory observations of various heritage-related activities that took place in Lasem. Different forms of local community participation in managing and using Lasem's cultural heritage have been identified using the citizen participation model (Arnstein, 1969; Chan, 2016). By analyzing three heritage-related programs in Lasem, it is contended that local community members can engage in these programs in various ways, either as initiators, workers, sources of information, or passive participants, depending on the context of the program.

Keyword

community participation, cultural heritage, Lasem, Indonesia

インドネシア、ラセムの文化遺産管理における 地域コミュニティ参加のさまざまな形態を探る

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要旨

インドネシアにあるラセムは、多文化主義で知られる地域であり、この多文化主義は、異なる文化集団が関わったさまざまな歴史的出来事に根ざしている（ジャワ文化、中国文化、イスラム

文化)。この異なる文化的背景から、ラセムには多くの遺物や建造物が残され、文化遺産として扱われたり、現在の遺産と推定されたりするようになった。そのため、遺産登録やデータベース化など、遺産管理に関するさまざまなプログラムが実施され、ラセムの「遺産エリア」の建設・整備が進められてきた。本稿では、ラセムの地域住民の役割と、ラセムの遺産の管理、利用、開発への関わりを紹介する。ラセムの地元住民の多くは、経歴や技術、知識の差はあるものの、すでにラセムの遺産を保存することに意識を向けている。このような地域住民の中には、ラセムの遺産の特定の問題や側面に焦点を当てた、より小さなコミュニティグループが作られている。またこれらの地域NGOグループは、メンバー間の類似した関心から作られたものである。この研究では、データと情報を得るために民族誌学的アプローチを採用し、ラセムで行われた様々な遺産関連活動での詳細なインタビューと参加型観察を行った。これらは市民参加の階梯モデル (Arnstein, 1969; Chan, 2016) を用いて、ラセムの文化遺産の管理・利用における地域コミュニティのさまざまな参加の形態を明らかにし、またラセムにおける3つの遺産関連プログラムを分析することで、地域コミュニティのメンバーは、プログラムの文脈に応じて、イニシエーター、労働者、情報源、あるいは受動的な参加者として、様々な方法でこれらのプログラムに参加することができるかと主張するものである。

キーワード

住民参加, 文化遺産, ラセム, インドネシア

Introduction

Kecamatan Lasem is a sub-district located in Rembang Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia. Today, among other things, Lasem is known for its multiculturalism. People from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds, such as Chinese-descent, Javanese, and Islamic cultures, blend in and live together in this small sub-district. Thus, Lasem is known as *Kota Santri*, as well as *Tionggok Kecil*, along with other titles such as *Kota Batik*, and recently, *Kota Pusaka*¹. These various cultural backgrounds and identities of Lasem that are visible in the present are rooted in the past. Known as a port area since the sixteenth century, Lasem had abundant visitors who came from overseas which made them 'open' to different cultures, and it can also be seen in the area's sociopolitics and economic dynamics (Nurhajarini et al. 2015, 142). In addition, traces and pieces of evidence

of the different cultures blending in Lasem may also be seen in the present day in the form of heritage buildings and objects, physical remains that have survived from hundreds of years ago that are spread throughout the sub-district.

Due to the layered cultural background, the objects and elements considered heritage that can be found in Lasem are also diverse as well. Remains of objects such as archaeological remains, relic stones, ancient tombs, and prayer sites can be found spread in Lasem. This paper focuses on tangible heritage in the form of built heritage, particularly old residential houses that were assumed to be built around the eighteenth, nineteenth, or twentieth centuries. The acculturation of the different cultural backgrounds results in different architectural styles: Chinese house, Geladak (Javanese) house, Indies (Dutch colonial) house, Chinese-Geladak house, Chinese-Indies house, Indies-Javanese house, and Joglo (also Javanese) house

(Riyanto et al. 2020, 59–64).

Even though not all of these houses are yet to be registered officially as heritage, at the present, Lasem as an area with plenty of heritage sites, buildings, and structures had taken interest from numerous individuals or groups—stakeholders. These stakeholders—including but not limited to local citizens, government staff, academics, tourists, heritage activists, and NGOs from within and from outside Lasem—want to develop, make use of, and promote Lasem’s heritage. This leads to the recently developing infrastructures and facilities around the area, as well as the rise of initiatives, events, and programs celebrating the culture and heritage of Lasem. Smaller and bigger initiatives were held, and some created partnerships out of the different stakeholders.

Previous studies of Lasem have highlighted the multiculturalism and tolerance of Lasem (Astuti, et al. 2019; Basiroen & Manuaba 2022), other scholars and experts have explored in depth the physical remains of vernacular structure and architectural styles of the buildings found in Lasem (Fauzy, et al. 2012; Kwanda 2020), while another focused on the use of the heritage sites concerning tourism (Wulandari et al. 2020; Darmayanti et al. 2022). However, relatively little has been discussed about the involvement of the different stakeholders—especially the local community members’ roles—in the management and use of Lasem’s heritage. This is important because the people who are involved and have a say in the use of the heritage shape the object itself physically, as well as the perception or interpretation of others regarding the heritage.

This paper aims to elaborate on and highlight the involvement of local citizens in programs and activities related to the heritage of

Lasem. The study will focus on the groups of people and their activities that are associated with the remaining artifacts or heritage in Lasem. Specifically, it will examine the local people’s perspective regarding the viewing, management, and utilization of these heritage sites. Through observations, these local citizens were often left out of discussions—particularly among scholars or academic discussion—when in reality, they also have the motivation and awareness concerning heritage issues, and they have been participating in events and programs related to heritage.

To investigate the participation of local people and communities in the management of cultural heritage in Lasem, the “Ladder of Participation” model will be used in the context of heritage management which was developed by Chan (2016) who adopted Arnstein’s (1969) theoretical framework which served to measure the different levels of citizen participation in general.

In her model of “Ladder of Citizen Participation,” Arnstein (1969) categorized eight types of citizen participation levels and arranged them in a ladder that shows the different degrees of participation, ranging from passive levels to levels where the citizens are judged to be able to be more actively participating. Some forms of ‘participation’ are argued to be often merely performed as ‘empty rituals’, that they are essentially performative, and in the end, only a certain powerful side benefits from the ‘participation’. Arnstein continues to argue that in a public participation setting, citizens might be allowed to give advice or plan certain aspects, but the final decision still lies in the powerholders’ hands to judge.

Chan (2016) refined Arnstein’s ladder model and modified certain levels to specifically fit

with the context of heritage management. The rungs are, in order from bottom to top, as follows: Education/Promotion, Protection/Conservation, Informing, Consultation, Advisory, Partnership, Grassroots-led Negotiation, and Self-management. Citizens are often barely involved actively in the education or promotion of heritage and the actual management, preservation, and conservation of the heritage. They are mostly only passively on the receiving end, one-way communication from the powerholders who are often heritage authorities, government staff, scholars, or experts. The public, citizens, or ordinary people, are being educated regarding heritage by the officials, and merely being informed that the officials are protecting or conserving the said heritage. She also pointed out that because the practice is top-down, the one-way transmitted knowledge might be influenced by the political agenda of the powerholders. On the opposite end of the ladder, similarly to Arnstein's argument, according to Chan, self-management is only rhetoric and unreachable because final approval of decisions still lies in the hands of power holders. Chan added that it is not appropriate "for the lay citizens to hold veto power over heritage management in the absence of expert knowledge" (Chan 2016, 17).

Cultural heritage management is not just about the technical aspects and processes of preserving and registering certain sites or objects as heritage, but it is also about managing the conflicts that come with the uses and meanings given to the heritage. Heritage practitioners, archaeologists, and other experts who are involved in cultural heritage management also become involved in wider social, cultural, and political conflicts (Smith et al. 2003, 67). 'Heritage' defined in itself, is

not only the physicality and the materiality of the remains of the past, but rather also about the process, action, and activities. These experiences surround the 'heritage'. These activities are including, but are not limited to, remembering, commemoration, passing on knowledge and memories, asserting identity, as well as expressing social and cultural values and meanings. The whole process of heritage, as Smith (2006) puts it: "as a social and cultural process that mediates a sense of cultural, social, and political change." (Smith 2006, 84).

Thus, this paper concentrates on the utilization and management of built heritage and heritage areas in Lasem, encompassing both the heritage sites that are officially titled and registered as heritage, as well as those that are currently in the registration process or are still considered as presumed heritage. Adopting Chan's (2016) ladder model, the different forms of participation and involvement of Lasem's community members in heritage management were examined using three different events and projects related to Lasem's cultural heritage and history that were conducted in the past three years.

Research Methods

The data and information illustrated in this article were gathered from my field study in Lasem from June to July 2022. The research was mostly done around the designated 'heritage area' of Lasem, which included some areas of Karangturi Village, Sumbergirang Village, Jatirogo Street, as well as the Lasem main road (Jalan Lasem). Employing an ethnographic approach, this study involved staying in Lasem, observing and participating in several community activities, and conducting interviews

with selected informants who were chosen through purposive sampling. The informants ranged from local community members of Lasem, members of local heritage non-governmental organizations (NGOs), experts in the fields related to built heritage, and government officials. However, due to the limited amount of time and availability of informants during the stay in Lasem, information was also gathered through online communication channels, such as text messaging and video calls with the informants.

The primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with selected informants, along with participatory observations of various heritage-related activities that took place in Lasem. The activities were including but were not limited to attending events, sitting in at discussions and community gatherings, participating in survey programs as a surveyor, and interacting daily with the community members, especially the ones related to heritage issues and management. The secondary data was collected from archives and online sources such as news and publications, to support the details that could not be provided by the informants at the site, such as official statements or statistics. Social media posts and other reliable websites were also used as references, especially because some of the community members have started to utilize social media to promote their heritage and publicized their initiatives, programs, and events.

Among several different projects and programs related to heritage, three examples that were conducted in recent years are going to be used in this paper: (1) data collection of objects presumed to be cultural heritage in Lasem; (2) infrastructure construction of Lasem's heritage area; and (3) Cerita

Nyah Lasem art exhibition. These programs were chosen because they involved several groups of stakeholders, including the local community members, and in the process of the implementation or conduct of the program, they have affected both or either the physical state of the 'heritage' (or presumed to be heritage) as well as the value or the perception of the said heritage in Lasem.

Data Collection of Objects Presumed To Be Cultural Heritage in Lasem

Before an object or a site may be registered or announced as a 'heritage' listed in an official list made by the Indonesian government, the first step is to collect the data and archive the information related to the sites that are presumed to be heritage. This is stated in Law No. 11 of 2010 on Cultural Heritage, that the process of establishing a heritage requires the object to be found and identified, and studied, which later would be registered, followed by proper conservation for the registered heritage. In Lasem's case, a survey program of heritage data collection was conducted by Indonesia's Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology to collect the required data. This program was a collaboration between experts from related disciplines (e.g. architecture, archaeology, heritage studies), and also involved a local non-governmental organization (NGO) of Lasem that works in the field of culture of heritage.

The activities of the program include collecting and recording the information surrounding the elements and the ornaments of tangible objects, buildings, or sites, as well as the intangible values, meanings, and uses of the objects through surveys and additional research. In

2019 the research team began to mark several buildings and made an aerial map of the places or sites that were presumed to have the potential to be categorized as heritage. It eventually resulted in a delineation of specific areas where the survey would take place, which are Karangturi Village, Gedongmulyo Village, Babagan Village, Sumbergirang Village, and Soditan Village. In 2021, the actual surveys were conducted. Surveyors were divided into teams and went to the areas they were in charge of, collecting the information and photos of the buildings and objects in the delineated areas. Teams of surveyors would go to each of the houses that are presumed to be heritage, to look around, take pictures, and ask questions to the owners or caretakers of the house, and in return, they would give a sum of cash or buy a product that was sold by the owner, if, for example, the house had become a place of business. Ms. SA, one of the volunteers who participated as a surveyor, gave out her testimonies, “the method was like this..., we asked permission from the caretaker of the house [presumed to be heritage], and we were allowed to look around and take pictures ... sometimes we gave ‘donation money’ to the house or visited buildings, the amount depends... it’s like a way of saying thanks for giving us permission [to conduct the survey].”.

The results of the survey were compiled in the form of a map that marks the locations of the identified heritage houses or sites. This map is created and owned under the ministry’s name, however, the scanned version of the map is published on the Facebook and Instagram pages of “KesengsemLasem”, an account associated with Lasem Heritage Foundation (LHF), the local heritage NGO partnered with this program. In addition, a large, printed

map was displayed in Museum Nyah Lasem, a local museum owned and managed by local community members.

Throughout the process and implementation of the program, as mentioned before, several stakeholders were involved. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology may be considered the main stakeholder, as they were the one conducting and funding the programs through collaborations with other groups and experts. Along with the ministry, teams of experts from the government staff were also involved in the survey program, namely the TACB ‘*Tim Ahli Cagar Budaya*’ and BPCB ‘*Balai Pelestarian Cagar Budaya*’, who are responsible for Lasem’s cultural heritage in the province and regency scale². In addition, this program also involved scholars or experts who were not government staff, who were either part of a group or institution or work individually. A notable expert group that was involved in the program was Pusat Dokumentasi Arsitektur, a group of experts in the field of architecture documentation in Indonesia. The experts’ role in this program is to use their knowledge to give guidance to conduct the research with the methodology they are specializing in. Both directly and indirectly, during the process, they educated and gave insights to other non-expert participants involved in the program. As facilitators, they had the responsibility to run the project. In addition, professional photographers also participated in this program to properly document the photos of the physical aspects of the heritage.

Local community members also had their roles in this survey program. Firstly, in this case, the local community members were not all the same. They were not to be lumped together as one big group, and they can be divided into

different roles and groups. Some local volunteers who participated as surveyors were members of the local heritage NGO group LHF, and some others also participated even though they were not part of the group. The surveyors also came from different backgrounds. Some members were already more familiar with heritage issues and have more experience related to the discipline, whereas there were also surveyors who were rather amateur or not yet had a full understanding of heritage before joining this program. Other than surveyors, other local community members who were involved were the heritage owners and/or the guardians or caretakers of the houses, who played a role in giving information and access to the objects and sites they owned, the ones that were presumed to be heritage.

Using the ladder of citizen participation, sorted from the very top, this program may fall under the category of Partnership, where LHF, as a group or formal institution, partnered with other stakeholders and supposedly have



Figure 1. Surveyors map the data of houses and objects presumed to be heritage using My Maps application

an ‘equal’ distribution of responsibility and power. The participation of local people in this program was categorized into the levels of Advisory and Consultation, where individuals from the local community volunteered as surveyors or provided information and access to the heritage. Finally, even if the level is located at the very bottom of the ladder, some of the local community members played an active role in promoting and educating others related to the results of this survey. The information and the results of the heritage mapping are up and posted on the local heritage group’s social media pages. In addition, a local museum, Museum Nyah Lasem, which is managed and owned by community members, had a printed copy of the map and displayed it for the public visitors to see.

Infrastructure Construction Project of Lasem’s Heritage Area

Because of the abundance of sites and buildings presumed to be heritage, Lasem as a ‘heritage area’ had attracted the attention of several stakeholders, including the Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing (KemenPUPR) of Indonesia. The ministry initiated and conducted a public infrastructure and facility construction project in Lasem’s designated ‘heritage’ area, which started in 2021 and finished in 2022. This includes the renovation of Lasem’s plaza ‘alun-alun’, Lasem’s market ‘Pasar Kreatif’, Jami’ Mosque, and the reconstruction of the streets and pedestrian sidewalks in the Chinatown area of Lasem. Often referred to as ‘*penataan kawasan pusaka Lasem*’ on official press releases, the area where the construction took place includes some areas of Karangturi Village, Sumbergirang Village,

and Jatirogo Street where some of the old houses and cultural places that attract tourists were located.

This construction project appointed a certain area of Lasem as the center, or 'the face' of the heritage area. To clarify, certain areas of Lasem were just recently named *Kawasan Pusaka*, which can be translated to 'Heritage Area', but sometimes the term is used interchangeably with *Kota Pusaka*, which is translated to 'Heritage City', a title not to be misunderstood with the fact that administratively Lasem is a sub-district (*kecamatan*), and not a city (*kota*). Furthermore, the aim of this construction project was to create or renovate the infrastructure of the area, without any direct interference with the heritage buildings. However, it can be argued that in some ways, the project did have an impact on the heritage buildings or on people's perceptions towards the heritage.

This construction project is entirely a government project both on a local and a national scale, where the decision-making activities and discussions were

mostly done by the higher-ups in charge. It was reported that the government's team of cultural heritage experts (TACB) was also involved, both TACB in the scale of Rembang Regency and the national level TACB. In their efforts in involving the citizens of Lasem who will be most impacted by the construction, the officials have conducted public hearings throughout the process of the project to listen to inputs and insights from the local community members.

When the project took place, there was dissatisfaction amongst some of the local community members towards how the construction has 'changed' the face of Lasem's heritage and the generally 'old' ambiance. Among the complaints being voiced, one of them is the newly installed streetlights that were placed in front of the old buildings. One of my informants, Mr. KL, a local tour guide who is used to bringing tourists to look around the area, showed his disappointment towards these streetlights' design and placements that, in his opinion, somewhat 'ruin' the existing style or feel of Lasem. According to him,



Figure 2. Construction of Lasem's heritage area, the plaza area (left), and Jami Mosque (right)

tourists come to Lasem to see and take pictures of themselves with the facade of the old houses and buildings with the old or vintage Chinese style architecture, and the streetlights are considered to be different with that particular style. Another resident of Lasem, Mr. AN, who is also an active member of a heritage NGO group, has also voiced his concerns saying that he thought the style of these streetlights is leaning toward the 'Indies-Dutch' architecture style, making the area of Lasem look like another city in Java, such as Semarang. Complaining about the heritage identity of the area, he mentioned that "the face of Karangturi Village is changing (because of the design)."

Another issue that was rather more pressing at that time was regarding the drainage system that existed in the area covered by the construction project. There was a heated debate among both some local people and experts involved, over 'old drainage' (*selokan kuno*) that was speculated to have existed for a long time as a part of house structures and was destroyed during the construction process. The drainage is presumed to be a cultural heritage object (also known as ODCB: *Objek Diduga Cagar Budaya*) but it has not been studied and was yet to be registered officially as a cultural heritage. Some local people, especially the ones who are actively engaged with Lasem's heritage issues, deeply regretted the decision from the officials to destroy the old drainage and replace it with a new one. Meanwhile, many other locals were indifferent towards a 'mere drainage' and did not show much interest or strong feelings towards the old drainage.

The community members of Lasem who are concerned about heritage issues made efforts to involve themselves in the construction of the area, teaming up with experts and scholars

from outside Lasem to argue their case. Lasem Heritage Foundation as a group had stepped in and made the effort to report what they judged as misconduct in handling the drainage, an object presumed to be heritage. They conducted their study and analysis by referring to the existing laws and documents, consulted with other scholars, and sent the recommended analysis to the government officials and the stakeholders running the project. This action was carried out to inform the powerholders that according to these experts' analysis, the construction implemented on site was not following the previously agreed DED (Detailed Engineering Design) documents in which the construction project was not supposed to make any changes, let alone destroy, Lasem's 'face', especially its heritage.

In the process of their research and crafting the documents for the stakeholders, these experts were also helped by other members of the group that were considered 'non-experts'. One of the 'non-expert' members, Ms. YL, admitted that as an active member of the group, she was also involved but was in charge of the part of the document that did not need specific expertise to write, such as the introduction part of the letter. She believed that the specific issues related to the disciplines of architecture and archaeology—which the experts were knowledgeable of—were rather heavy subjects and require formal education to completely understand those subjects. According to her, she only had a general understanding of those issues, and the actual analysis should be entrusted to the experts.

Using the ladder model, the involvement of citizens in this program can be put at the Consultation level, where the local community members were given chance and

invited to express their opinions, at public hearings conducted by the officials. However, this program also falls into the category of Informing, and Protection/Conservation, because the citizens were mostly only informed that the officials were conducting this project and was informed that they would protect the heritage in the process. The citizens may have complaints, inputs, or opinions, but in the end, the decision lies in the hand of the powerholders. Furthermore, it can be argued that the involvement of citizens in this program also falls under the category of Education/Promotion to a certain extent. This is because certain groups of citizens, particularly members of heritage NGOs or those categorized as experts, attempt to educate other citizens and promote Lasem's heritage, along with what they perceive to be the appropriate approach towards heritage management. This was done through several means, such as conducting their own research and analysis, hosting webinars, and spreading awareness through online content. Furthermore, there was also an instance where a local artist performed a 'protest' on the construction site to voice out their concerns.

Cerita Nyah Lasem Art Exhibition

The first two programs mentioned before were programs initiated and conducted by Indonesian government officials, albeit from different ministries. As for the third example, this paper will present a program that was initiated by a local heritage NGO and examine how local community members of Lasem made their own efforts and initiatives to involve themselves in the use, management, and promotion of local heritage.

Cerita Nyah Lasem was a contemporary

art exhibition held in Lasem for one week in November 2021. This exhibition was initiated and organized by a local heritage Lasem Heritage Foundation (LHF), a local heritage NGO previously mentioned in the other two programs. The meaning of the exhibition's title can be translated as 'The Story of Lasem Lady', as the theme of the show was centered around the life history of 'Lasem ladies', which were closely related to *Peranakan* culture. The forms and mediums of the artworks vary from two-dimensional artworks (e.g. drawings, paintings, photographs, infographic posters), objects (Batik clothes, wood installation), and videos of performances.

The event took place in two venues in Lasem, Museum Nyah Lasem, and Rumah Tegel Lasem, where the artworks were displayed on the interior and exterior of the old houses. In addition, the opening ceremony and seminar were held in Rumah Merah. These three houses are known for their old age, presumed to be built around the 1800s or 1900s. Regarded as a cultural heritage, the specific venues chosen for the exhibition added different impressions and feelings experienced by the visitors. The decision to use these venues also correlates with the theme highlighted in this exhibition and its artworks, which revolves around the culture, heritage, and identity of Lasem.

Along with the curated concept of the displayed artworks, his exhibition also emphasized the fact that the participating artists were local artists from Lasem and Rembang, who showcased their works alongside other professional artists who came from outside Lasem. These two different groups of artists each created their artworks with the given theme, as seen through their interpretation and perspective. Most of the artists who were invited from outside Lasem,



Figure 3. Artworks displayed at the exhibition. Taking place in old houses, artworks were displayed alongside the objects that already exist inside the house. (Source: nyahlasem.com, accessed May 7, 2023)

as well as the curators, were mostly people who went to art school and received formal higher education in arts. With active careers in the art scene, they had previous experiences of participating in a ‘proper’ exhibition, even the ones held internationally. By having people from outside Lasem, who are active in the wider art scene and have connections with more people, taking part in this exhibition, Cerita Nyah Lasem was able to get bigger exposure and a wider audience. As for the local artists from Lasem or Rembang, the background of the participants were more diverse. A few of them were members of the LHF group, and the rest of the artists were invited because they were judged to be capable of creating and displaying artworks in this exhibition (e.g. from their previous works and background). Opportunities were given to the local people of Lasem or Rembang to showcase their artworks. These participants were asked to join the exhibition through a ‘closed’ invitation from the organizer. Some participants did not have a conventional ‘artist’ title, but their job was

more of a fashion designer, researcher, teacher, and freelancer, among others. The diverse background, discipline, and experiences of the local artists did not put them at disadvantage, rather they were able to give different takes or perspectives on certain themes.

As part of the research, opportunity was given to speak with Mr. AY, a local artist who participated in the exhibition. When he participated in the exhibition, he was a university student which majored in Management and did graphic design as a freelance job in his spare time. The young artist lives in Lasem, and he was able to join the exhibition because he was invited by the organizers. Upon agreeing to join as an exhibitor, he thought he would create artworks to add as entries to his portfolio, and was surprised to find that the scale of the exhibition was bigger than what he expected, which allowed him to meet and learn from other artists and get new insights. “I was invited to participate (as an artist), and I wanted to make artwork for my portfolio. At first, I didn’t know the scale (of the exhibition) was that

big. I also had the chance to learn from other amazing artists.” His artworks focused on Rumah Tegel, an old house that is also the place to produce ‘tegel’ (floor tiles). Throughout his creative process, he conducted his research by visiting the house by himself and observing the tiles scattered over the production sites. He showcased his designs of 20 replicas of *tegel*, a *tegel* catalog, and, in addition, a romance fiction with Rumah Tegel as its background. Mr. AY wrote the story himself, as he was inspired by the story of the late owner of the house.

Mr. AY was one of the artists approached and invited by Lasem Heritage Foundation (LHF), a local NGO group that initiated, organized, and executed the event. LHF is a group that is actively engaged in Lasem’s heritage, focuses on the preservation and development of Lasem’s cultural and natural heritage, and aims to promote Lasem as a heritage ‘city’ that is acknowledged internationally. This is the same group that was also involved in the previous two case studies, collaborating with the ministry of education to collect a database of heritage in Lasem and the group that sent an analysis of what was judged to be mishandling of objects presumed to be heritage at construction sites. The *Cerita Nyah Lasem* exhibition was one of LHF’s initiatives to activate creative spaces in Lasem and to introduce Lasem’s culture and heritage to the people outside Lasem. In addition, this event was funded by Indonesia’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology’s *Fasilitasi Bidang Kebudayaan* (FBK) program.³

Applying the ladder model to the initiatives of local community members in the heritage group, it can be argued that they fall under the Grassroots-led Negotiation level, with the local NGO members acting as organizers

responsible for planning and implementing the event. Additionally, it can also be categorized under the Partnership level, as the group collaborated with various stakeholders to make the event possible. This included partnering with the ministry for funding, collaborating with professional artists from outside Lasem to hold a contemporary art exhibition, and working with local artists who participated as exhibitors. Finally, the local community members played a great role in the education or promotion of Lasem’s culture and heritage, because the event itself introduced, promoted, and educated the visitors—the general public—about Lasem’s culture and identity through the artworks displayed in the event. This also includes the promotion by setting up a website and social media promotion.

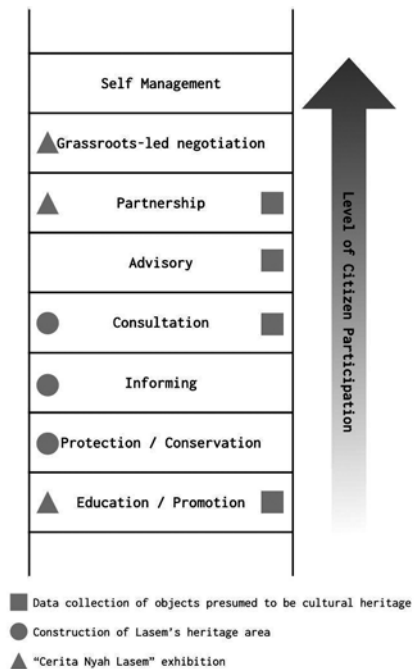


Figure 4. Different levels of citizen participation in the three programs related to Lasem’s heritage are mapped out in a ladder of citizen participation (Arnstein, 1969; Chan, 2016).

Discussion

The three programs have illustrated the different ways local citizens of Lasem have contributed or involved themselves in issues or projects related to Lasem's heritage and culture. In all of the examples, the involvement of local community members is always tied to the Lasem Heritage Foundation (LHF), a local non-governmental organization that works in the field of heritage. In Lasem, LHF is only one group among several other non-governmental organizations or groups that exist within Lasem's local community as a whole. Even though the members of the different groups might be friends or neighbors, these groups worked separately, as there are various aspects of Lasem's multicultural heritage in which each of the groups may decide on their own which aspect of Lasem's culture they would like to focus on.

What is important to emphasize here is that the local citizens or community members of Lasem cannot be generalized and lumped together as one homogeneous group. They make smaller groups amongst themselves, especially being a 'multicultural' area, there are layers of other backgrounds, identities, and values each individual believes in. An individual may choose to join and be part of a certain group, becoming members of two or more groups at the same time, or not being part of any groups at all. As mentioned by Waterton and Smith (2010), a 'community' keeps being reconstructed through a series of experiences, engagements, and relations between people who may share common interests or causes (in this case, heritage). In the context of Lasem's heritage, there is a possibility that in the future new groups will be created, or that existing groups

are going to merge or disband. Some citizens gather under one association such as an NGO or a group, but there are also local community members who are indifferent towards such topics (heritage, history, culture) and did not join such groups.

Within the highlighted case studies, it can be understood how among the local people, there is already an awareness of proper management and preservation of heritage in Lasem. Inquiring about their reasons for preserving their 'heritage', the majority of the interviewees I engaged with expressed a common motivation—'identity'. They believe that the remains of heritage and culture make today's Lasem, and if the physical remains of Lasem's past are to be destroyed, then there would not be anything left for the future generation to understand Lasem's identity. This is especially true for some of the owners of the old houses designated as heritage, whose personal memories are tied to the physical elements of the houses that have been passed down from different generations of their families. In addition, there is also a sense of pride regarding the heritage remains in Lasem, that these types of houses are seen to be unique and one of a kind, that they only exist in Lasem and cannot be found anywhere else outside Lasem.

The effort and awareness of Lasem's local community members to preserve their heritage is not solely influenced by the concept of 'identity'. There is the argument that non-locals, such as scholars, professionals, or tourists who have taken an interest in Lasem, also play a significant role in shaping local attitudes towards heritage preservation. Interactions between local people and 'outsiders' might give the locals ideas or insights into what was expected from them as locals, what was expected from Lasem.

At first, the local people may not realize that the culture and heritage in their everyday life are valuable or important, or that the objects titled as heritage may be utilized for their benefit. However, when they saw that tourists wanted to come from places far from Lasem to see their culture and heritage, they started to understand and thought that what they have is valuable, unique, and attractive to others, even if they did not think of that before. Mrs. EK, a local batik entrepreneur and craftswoman, admitted that she started to realize the potential of her batik once she met a renowned fashion designer from Jakarta who had taken interest in her batik. In addition, some of the local people have also started to be aware that they can make use of and capitalize on their culture and heritage for economic purposes (e.g. in tourism-related industry, or even selling the old house in itself).

In recognizing the various roles of how the citizens may participate in programs related to cultural heritage management, four different citizen roles have been identified using Arnstein (1969) and Chan's (2016) ladder models as references. The citizens' roles in participation can be categorized based on the actual tasks and responsibilities assigned to them, such as initiators, doers, sources of information, or passive participants.

When citizens are involved in heritage programs as initiators or as planners, they would have the influence and power to be responsible for certain programs that they have initiated themselves. This role might fall under different levels on the ladder model, such as Self-management, Grassroots-led Negotiation, Partnership, Protection, and Education levels. As an example, like the Cerita Nyah Lasem exhibition mentioned before,

local community members would host the exhibition program, responsible and in charge of the planning, organizing, and monitoring of the implementation of the project. This also applies when the local people partnered up with other stakeholders, under the premise that the responsibilities and influences between each stakeholder are somewhat 'equal'.

Other than as initiators, local community members may also be involved in a program where they would be the doers, the ones working, performing, or implementing the program. This might fall under the level of Partnership or Advisory, and the doers might be working as volunteers, surveyors, workers, and caretakers in heritage sites. Local community members who take on this role might do their duties by following orders or guidance from experts, officials, or the ones in charge of the project. During the implementation of a project, their inputs or insights might or might not be considered, depending on the ones who are in charge.

Another role that might be taken by local community members when they want to participate in cultural heritage management is to become a source of information, which may fall under the category of Advisory, Consultation, and Informing on the ladder. This is especially applicable to local owners of sites presumed or labeled as heritage, as well as local experts such as tour guides or activists who are very knowledgeable in the field of heritage and local culture. Other than providing information, they may also provide access to the information or certain sites or places to the authorities in charge of a heritage management or program, that otherwise would not be made available to the general public.

It can be argued that local people may still

participate in a heritage-related program in a passive manner. To be informed or educated on the receiving end of a program, and yet the participation still counts. For example, by going to a heritage exhibition as visitors, local community members might learn, be educated, and be informed about heritage and other issues about the heritage. Using the ladder as a reference, this kind of participation might fall under Informing, Protection, and Education levels on the ladder.

The ladder model of citizen participation has been utilized to identify the involvement of Lasem's local community members in heritage-related programs. However, it is worth noting that based on Lasem's case study, participation on the lower levels of the ladder may not always be passive and could even be more significant, depending on the specific circumstances. As mentioned by Chan (2016) who refined this ladder, the levels do not indicate the quality of the participation. The lower rungs are not necessarily meaningless, and the top rungs are not always better. The Education level is noteworthy, as it is typically placed at the bottom rung of the ladder. Chan explained that this is because education is usually provided by the government or experts. However, nowadays, citizens and local community members can educate themselves and others without the physical presence of experts, with the help of the internet. Furthermore, local community members and local heritage NGO groups had been utilizing online platforms such as social media and websites to promote and educate others, as they can also actively educate themselves with the available resources.

Conclusion

Diverse cultural objects and sites that are registered or presumed to be heritage in Lasem have taken the interests of various stakeholders to manage, develop, and make use of those sites. This includes the local community members of Lasem themselves, who have formed local NGO groups and involved themselves in issues related to heritage. As shown in three different programs initiated by ministries or local groups, when participating in certain programs, citizens may take the roles of initiators, doers, sources of information, or just passively participate.

The chosen programs that were illustrated as case studies also correlate with the forms and roles of citizen participation. Programs and projects organized and initiated by ministry or government officials would take a bigger scale and have more resources, both in terms of their implementation as well as the long-term impacts after the project is finished. On the contrary, locally initiated projects are usually done on a smaller scale or more temporarily. Indeed, the roles taken by citizens in participating in grassroots-led projects may be bigger than government-initiated programs. This paper highlights the enthusiasm of the local community in Lasem to participate in heritage-related programs, even going so far as to initiate these programs themselves. Arguably, the existence of local NGO groups also helps to facilitate and organize the participation of local community members who want to be actively involved in heritage issues in Lasem.

As specified above, participation such as partnerships or collaborations between local people and other stakeholders happened in several heritage projects that took place in Lasem. However, whether or not the participation is

truly meaningful and beneficial for all parties involved could only be judged through close observation of what happens at the site during the implementation, otherwise, partnerships that were created out of formalities would only create a tokenistic kind of participation.

Notes

- 1) *Kota Santri* directly translates to “city of Islamic students”, because there are many Islamic boarding schools operating in Lasem. *Tionggok Kecil* translates to “little China”, whereas *Kota Batik* means “city of Batik”. The recent title, *Kota Pusaka*, can be translated as “city of heritage”.
- 2) *Tim Ahli Cagar Budaya* (Team of Cultural Heritage Experts), commonly abbreviated as TACB, is a group of certified experts who have the knowledge and skills related to conservation practice, which is qualified to recommend to establish, upgrade, and cancel the status of ‘heritage’ of an object. There is a national level (recommendation given to the minister), province level (recommendation given to the governor), and regency/city level (recommendation given to the regent or the mayor) of TACB. In Lasem’s case, TACB Rembang is responsible for Lasem’s heritage, as Lasem is a sub-district located at Rembang Regency.
- 3) The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology has the funding program of ‘*Fasilitasi Bidang Kebudayaan*’ (Facilitating the Cultural Sector), often abbreviated as FBK. The program was opened for any practitioners in the field of arts and culture to submit their project proposals and to receive the fund if they get approved.
- 4) The informants I interviewed regarding this topic were the ones that were already involved or familiar in Lasem’s heritage issues, such as heritage NGO members, local tour guides, and heritage (old house) owners.

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