

The Role of the Local Champion in the Development of Wanurejo Tourism Village

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ABSTRACT

Wanurejo Village is one of 20 villages in Borobudur Subdistrict that was developed into a tourist village to support the development of temple tourism that has developed previously with the existence of Borobudur, Mendhut, and Pawon Temples around the village area. The existence of this tourist village, which was pioneered in 1999, has made a major contribution, both in terms of economic and regional development, to the community and, of course, to the village itself. This is due to the movement of local champions who became initiators in the development of tourism activities in Wanurejo. This study aims to explain the role of local activists in the development of Wanurejo Tourism Village using a qualitative descriptive method based on a stage of rural transformation approach, so that this study can find a timeline that explains in detail the role of local champions at each stage.



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1. Introduction

Borobudur Temple has become one of Indonesia's top attractions, especially with its title as a UNESCO Cultural Heritage Site since 1991. The development of tourism at this temple has an impact on the surrounding villages with the expansion of tourist activities in this area. The expansion of tourist activities has an impact on Wanurejo Village, which is directly adjacent to Borobudur Village as a village that is the administrative area of Borobudur Temple. Even one of the entrances to the Borobudur Tourism Area is Wanurejo Village, precisely through Balaputeradewa Road or Syailendra Raya Road, if through the Palbapang Lion Gate. In addition, Pawon Temple, which is one of the attractions of temple tourism in this area, is located in one of the hamlets in Wanurejo Village, namely Brojonalan Hamlet, so this strategic position gives Wanurejo great potential to be developed into a tourism area.

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[Okazaki \(2008\)](#) and [Romadhoni & Prakoso \(2023\)](#) explained that the community is an important element in tourism development. This direct community involvement will provide benefits for the community and its environment. ([Dangi & Jamal, 2016](#); [Nair & Hamzah, 2015](#); [Poerwanto, 2017](#); [Putra et al., 2017](#)). The penta-helix tourism concept is a tourism development concept that emphasizes synergy and collaboration between stakeholders ([Sugiarto et al., 2022](#)), one of these stakeholders is the community. The community has a strategic position in tourism, namely as the main actor or backbone in organizing tourism. ([Adimihardja, 1999](#); [Hasanah, 2017](#); [Prakoso & de Lima, 2019](#); [Yotsumoto et al., 2016](#)). This position is not without challenges; tourism development carried out by the community independently is still rarely found and usually still requires assistance from other parties ([Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2016](#); [Nair & Hamzah, 2015](#)). Included in initiating and triggering the initial development of tourism, this initiator is often referred to as a local champion. ([Fitra Aziza & Prameswara, 2023](#); [Setiawan et al., 2019](#); [Simanjuntak & Sariffuddin, 2017](#); [Yuwono & Putrianti, 2022](#)).

Wanurejo is one of the villages in the Borobudur area that has developed into a tourist village since 1999. The development of this tourist village cannot be separated from the influence of temple tourism in the Borobudur, Pawon, and Mendhut temple areas. Tourism activities in these temples extend to surrounding villages, including Wanurejo. The expansion of tourist activities was initially responded to by Wanurejo with the emergence of restaurants, inns, parking lots, and other tourist facilities. Until the development of a new attraction in Wanurejo developed by local activists as the forerunner of a tourist village that became an alternative tour of temple tourism activities that had existed before.

This research aims to identify and explain the role of local activists at each stage of the transformation of the Wanurejo Tourism Village area. The point of this research is to create a timeline that explains in detail the role of local activists at each stage so that it can be utilized as a guideline for the development of tourist villages based on the involvement of local communities.

Other research on the theme of local champions has been conducted by many other researchers. There is research on the involvement and role of local champions in the development of community-based tourism in tourist villages. ([Aziza et al., 2023](#); [Fitra Aziza & Prameswara, 2023](#); [Musthofa, 2019](#); [Simanjuntak & Sariffuddin, 2017](#); [Tranggono et al., 2021](#); [Yuwono & Putrianti, 2022](#)). [Setiawan et al. \(2019\)](#) also explained the role of local champions in the utilization of home gardens. Meanwhile ([Ainamo et al., 2003](#)) explain local champions as agents of change in the transformation of national and regional innovation systems.

2. Methods Research

This research applies a qualitative descriptive method based on primary and secondary data, referring to the framework proposed by [Yin \(2014\)](#). Primary data was obtained through direct observation, participation in activities, and interviews with community leaders and managers of tourist villages in Wanurejo. They are considered informants who have an in-depth understanding of the development of tourism villages in the area. In addition, primary data collection also involved visual documentation in the form of photos and videos. On the other hand, secondary data was obtained from official documents, related studies, and articles related to Wanurejo tourism village.

[Creswell \(2015\)](#) and [Yin \(2014\)](#) state that the qualitative descriptive method is an approach that describes a phenomenon based on a particular theory as an interpretative guide. This method connects theory with empirical data to provide an in-depth description of conditions in the field. By referring to this concept, the approach applied in this study relates to the stages of rural transformation as described by [Prakoso et al. \(2021\)](#), with six stages including: initiation, association, diversification, intervention, expansion, and acquisition. The

description of these stages is explained in a periodized manner that outlines the role of local activists according to certain classifications of events that have occurred.

3. Results and Discussion

Wanurejo Village is located in Borobudur Sub-district, Magelang District, Central Java. This village has an area of 2,75 m² (BPS Kabupaten Magelang, 2019). The village is directly adjacent to Tuksongo Village in the north, Bumiharjo Village in the south, Wringinputih Village in the west, and the Progo River in the east. Wanurejo Village is located next to Borobudur Village, Mendut Village in the north, and Candirejo Village in the south. From an administrative point of view, one of the attractions of temple tourism, namely Pawon Temple, is located in Wanurejo Village, precisely in Brojonalan Hamlet. The location of Wanurejo Village along the paths of Mendut Temple, Pawon Temple, and Borobudur Temple makes tourism development in this area very strategic.

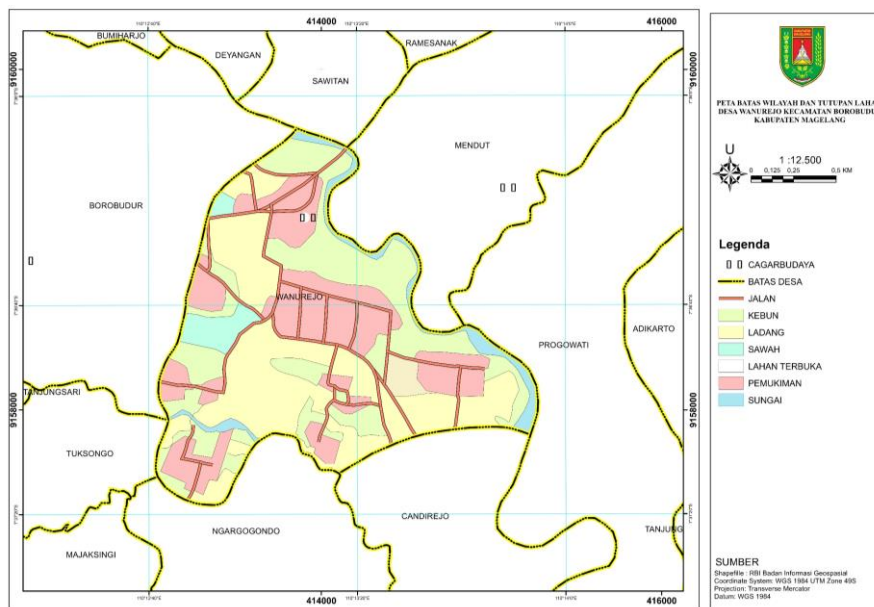


Figure 1. Boundary and Land Cover Map of Wanurejo Village
Source: Processed from RBI BIG, 2020

The development of the tourism sector in this village includes the potential of rural tourism rooted in tradition and cultural arts, such as *Jatilan* (Jaran Keping/kuda lumping), *Kobro Siswo*, *Topeng Ireng*, *Tong-tong Lek*, *Arumba*, *Rebana*, *Angklung*, and *Campur Pituturan*. In fact, there are new artificial tourist attractions, such as an autocar junkyard and a funpark junkyard located right next to Balkondes Wanurejo. The village's proximity to Borobudur Temple has resulted in residents' houses becoming impromptu homestays (Prakoso et al., 2020).

The development of the tourism sector in Wanurejo is an initiative that originated from individuals within the Wanurejo community, particularly from among the village's younger generation. A youth group later joined the *Padepokan Karya Muda* as their first step in raising awareness of the tourism potential in their area. Despite facing several obstacles administratively, the spirit of the Wanurejo youth in mobilizing tourism efforts was not extinguished, and it became a strong foundation for the growth of the tourism sector in their neighborhood.

In 1999, efforts began to develop tourism activities in Wanurejo. This development was accompanied by the emergence of a group considered to be the prime mover in the tourism

sector, the *Paguyuban Karya Muda*. Correspondingly, in 2003, the Village Tourism Board (*Badan Pariwisata Desa/Bapardes*) was established, followed by the Regional Tourism Cooperative (*Koperasi Pariwisata Daerah/Koparda*) in 2013 in response to a cooperation offer from State-Owned Enterprises. This offer was the beginning of the formation of SOE villages in nine Wanurejo hamlets. Then, in 2016, Balkondes was formed.

The development of tourism in Wanurejo is closely related to the existence of a tourism awareness group (*Kelompok Sadar Wisata/Pokdarwis*) in Wanurejo Village. The beginning of Pokdarwis activities can be traced back to 1999, when they began their steps in organizing tour packages that focused on daily activities, such as *ani-ani* (traditional harvesting process) tours and *lotek* (Javanese salad) making. *Ani-ani* tours engage tourists in the experience of harvesting rice using the traditional ani-ani tool, while *lotek*-making tours invite tourists to buy *lotek* ingredients and process them into a dish. This concept emerged after tourists visited Borobudur Temple and saw farmers harvesting rice, inspiring the development of daily tourism activities in Wanurejo. This is in line with what was conveyed by ([Rozzaq Rofiq & Prananta, 2021](#); [Sukarno et al., 2023](#)) that Pokdarwis is the backbone of developing tourism potential and encouraging the involvement and empowerment of local communities.

Pokdarwis worked closely with the Wanurejo Farmer Group Association (*Gabungan Kelompok Tani/Gapoktan*) in organizing the *lotek*-making tour. These tours not only provide tourists with a hands-on experience of picking ingredients from farmers' farms but also involve farmers who have been identified through the use of a *caping* (a type of conical hat generally made of woven bamboo) and *surjan* (Javanese men's suit) as their identifiers. This collaboration forms a positive synergy between *Pokdarwis* and *Gapoktan*, creating a unique tourism experience and directly empowering the local farming community.

In subsequent developments, Wanurejo began to play a more intense role as a supporter of existing temple tourism, so local activists played a role in developing alternative attractions, for example, in the development of traditional tourism, arts and culture, rural nature tourism, and trekking around the village. In addition, in 2003, Pokdarwis Wanurejo organized a tour that was routinely carried out every year, namely Wanurejo Cultural Festival. This event received an award from The Indonesian World Records Museum (MURI) as a medium for promoting tourist villages. Furthermore, in 2011, through a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program from one of the State-Owned Enterprises, the community and hamlet management developed Jowahan hamlet as a fostered village that developed homestay accommodation.

In 2016, Wanurejo became one of the villages that built a Balkondes with the sponsorship of one of the state-owned enterprises, and community leaders and *Bapardes* played a major role in the planning and construction of this facility. The Balkondes even triggered the emergence of a new attraction (Autocar Junkyard) and the growth of Village-Owned Enterprises as the manager of tourism activities in Wanurejo. The government also has an important role in the development of village tourism, from the central government to the village government ([Murdyastuti & Mayasiana, 2020](#)). In 2020, Wanurejo became an area affected by the development of the Borobudur Area as a Super Priority Tourism Destination Area. With assistance in the construction of facilities such as sidewalks, street lighting, and tourism residential facilities or homestays, the village government has a significant role in the development of these tourism facilities, namely as a mediator of Central Government assistance, in this case the Ministry of Public Works and Housing, to the Wanurejo community.

Currently, the Village Government and the Wanurejo community are working together in the development of tourism in Wanurejo Tourism Village, especially with the development of the Borobudur Area as a Super-Priority Tourism Destinations. Wanurejo, as one of the closest villages to temple tourism activities, must be prepared for the rapid development of tourism in the area. Village-Owned Enterprises as one of the important organizations in tourism

development, has been working with local groups that can support tourism, such as *Gapoktan*, Pokdarwis, Art Groups, and Batik Craft Groups. The cooperation is in the form of preparing accommodation and tourist activity locations in Balkondes, *Andong* (traditional horse cart) tour packages, *onthel* (traditional bicycle) tours, VW cruises, and cultural tourism events.



Figure 2. Wanurejo Cultural Arts Event activities
Source: Observation, 2020 and jogatribunnews, 2020

On the timeline division of the development of village tourism in Wanurejo developed by Prakoso (2021), The initiation stage occurred in 1999–2003, the association, diversification, and intervention stages in 2004–2014, and the expansion and acquisition stages in 2015–current. The following is an analysis of the stages and the role of tourism activists.

Table 1. Stages and Roles of Wanurejo Tourism Local Champions

Stages	Local Champions	Roles
initiation	<i>Karya Muda</i> Communities (PKM)	Activator of tourism activities by inviting residents to be involved in planning and organizing tour packages based on daily activities for tourists.
association	Village Tourism Board (<i>Bapardes</i>)	a. Become a tourism management institution in Wanurejo, formed from several elements, such as PKM and community leaders b. Establishing a Regional Tourism Cooperative (<i>Koparda</i>)
diversification	Village Tourism Board (<i>Bapardes</i>)	a. Develop Wanurejo Cultural Festival on a regular basis b. Encourage the development of small or home industries, such as the wood accessory manufacturing industry c. Encourage the development of tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis), which are based on cultural arts and crafts. d. Assist the village government in fostering SMEs groups in the village e. Encouraging the development of tourist transportation (<i>Andong</i> and <i>Onthel</i>) f. Assisting the development of tourist accommodation (homestays)
intervention	Village Tourism Board (<i>Bapardes</i>)	a. Participated in the formation of the Dewi Wanu Batik Art Group, which was encouraged by UNESCO.

Stages	Local Champions	Roles
		b. Play a role in the development of Balkondes
expansion	Village-Owned Enterprises	a. Development of new attractions (VW safari cruise, artificial tourism) b. Organization of Wanurejo events c. Organization of tour packages and events
acquisition	Village-Owned Enterprises	a. Government facilitation mediator b. Organization of tour packages and events

Source: Analysis, 2023

From the table described above, it can be concluded that tourism development in Wanurejo Tourism Village has an interesting timeline with the emergence of local activist organizations in the village. The changes that occur at each stage do not mean that one organization is replaced by a new organization, but there is a fusion and adaptation of the organization to be able to follow developments at each stage. This fusion and adaptation went well and smoothly, so no major negative problems were found and had an impact on the implementation of tourism activities in Wanurejo Tourism Village.

4. Conclusion

Wanurejo Tourism Village is one of the tourism villages that has developed and survived since 1999 until now. This tourist village developed due to the large role of local champions who were accommodated in local organizations, such as Karya Muda Communities, the Village Tourism Board, Gapoktan, Small Home Industries, and Pokdarwis Arts and Crafts. These organizations are a fusion and adaptation of existing groups in the community, until now becoming Village-Owned Enterprises as the manager of tourism activities in Wanurejo. These local community organizations have an important role at every stage, starting with pioneering tourism activities, institutional formation, planning and managing tourist attractions, providing community assistance, and mediating third parties with local communities. One of the important things about this organization is that it consists of elements of the Wanurejo local community and has a good regeneration system, so that tourism development through the involvement and empowerment of local communities in Wanurejo is expected to be sustainable.

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