



Empowering Communities from Below: Local Leadership and Organising in KWT Lestari

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Abstract

Community organising, as a form of bottom-up development, challenges top-down approaches that traditionally view communities as passive recipient rather than active agents of change. This study examines the internal dynamics of women farmers group (kelompok wanita tani/KWT) Lestari in Pakembinangun, Sleman, under the leadership of Sri Hartanti, a key figure who has been instrumental in the group's development. Using a qualitative method through in-dept interview, the research identifies the organisational model applied by KWT Lestari through twelve analytical indicators, including goals of community action, assumptions concerning community structure and problem conditions, basic change strategies, characteristic change tactics and techniques, salient practitioner roles, medium of change, orientation toward power structures, boundaries of the community client system, assumptions regarding sub-community interests, conceptions of public interest, client population, and client role. Despite challenges in sustaining member participation, findings show that KWT Lestari effectively employs the locality development model, positioning members as active change agents within their community. This study contributes to understanding how community organising can succeed in diverse social, cultural, and economic contexts, offering insights for future community-based development efforts.

Keywords : Bottom-up development, community organising, locality development, KWT Lestari

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Introduction

Top-down development has often positioned communities as passive recipients rather than active agents of change. In Indonesia, such approaches have been implemented since 1988 through various poverty alleviation programs, including the National Program for Community Empowerment (Program Nasional Pemberdayaan Masyarakat/PNPM) launched in 2006, and its successor, PNPM Mandiri in 2007. PNPM Mandiri was divided into several branches: rural, urban, disadvantaged and special regions, and socio-economic infrastructure (Wicaksono & Darusman, 2001). However, the continuation of these programs has faced various challenges, including fostering dependency on government aid and widespread corruption.

According to the Audit Board of the Republic of Indonesia (2015), by 2014 the total losses due to misappropriated PNPM Mandiri funds has reached IDR 300 million. Lucas (2016) highlights cases of corruption, such as village heads—like in Bandar Agung—who seized control of infrastructure projects and diverted up to 20% of the budget for personal gain. Infrastructure groups sometimes fabricated projects to secure funding, and even facilitators were involved in coaching local actors on how to siphon off resources. Muslim (2017) notes that in Batu city, East Java, communities became dependent on business credit assistance (revolving loans), with many refusing to repay, resulting in high rates of bad debt. Liana et al. (2015) and Ensminger (2017) further document corruption across various PNPM sectors, including construction projects,



schemes, and revolving savings. These systemic issues ultimately led to the discontinuation of PNPM Mandiri in 2014.

The persistent dependence on PNPM assistance shows that communities in Indonesia have yet to achieve true self-reliance. Limited participation in development processes has deepened social and economic inequalities. The failure of top-down approaches to reflect the real needs of communities has led to emergence of a bottom-up approach—one that positions communities as the main agents of change through localised organising.

The concept of community organising dates back by Lao Tse after the 7th century B.C., and reemerged in modern times through figures like Saul Alinsky and Paulo Freire. Alinsky, focused on urban communities, emphasised people power as a sustainable, organised force for

social change (Schutz & Miller, 2015). Freire, working with rural communities, viewed community organising as a tool for raising critical awareness and resisting domination through culturally grounded engagement. These two figures are widely known for their great influence in theory and practice of community organising.

Community organising redefines development by involving communities in identifying, establishing, and pursuing shared goals (Ross & Lappin, 1967). While external facilitators may assist, true sustainability depends on internal leadership. As Tan and Topatimasang (2011) argue, success is achieved when communities independently manage and lead their own organisations—free from reliance on political parties, external agendas, or charismatic figures.



Given the diversity of social, economic, and cultural context, there is no universal model of community organising. Instead, effective strategies must respond to each community's unique conditions and needs. Therefore, to examine in depth how an organisation is formed, functions, and develops in its respective contexts, this study explores the organising model of KWT Lestari in Pakembinangun, Sleman, under the leadership of Sri Hartanti (commonly referred to as Tanti). Applying Jack Rothman's theory of community organising model, the research examines how KWT Lestari developed into a resilient organisation, as their remarkable ability to continuously innovate and effectively overcome challenge—particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic—by innovating aloe vera products, strengthening capacities, and expanding its market presence.

3 Core models of community organising

Rothman (1979) classifies approaches to community organising into three principal models, which remain widely used as analytical frameworks in social development studies. These are: locality development, social planning, and social action. Each model offers a different way on understanding the social dynamics, achieving strategic social change, and defining the roles of both community members and practitioners in the organising process.

Locality development

Locality development, commonly referred to as Model A, emphasises the sustainability of organisations through active community participation. Organisations following Model A emerge through a long-term



process driven by the community members themselves. Based on the assumption that community holds a deep understanding of their own circumstances, this model positions them as the most competent actors in identifying challenges and formulating effective, relevant solutions. Although the model underscores community capabilities, its sustainability still benefits from the presence of practitioners. However, their role is limited to that of facilitators or enablers, without replacing the community as the main actor. Ultimately, Model A aims to cultivate power and strength rooted within the community, enabling the organisation to operate independently of external actors.

Social planning

In contrast to Model A, Model B or social planning centres on the critical role of practitioners

in community organising. It conceptualises the community as recipients or clients facing complex issues, while practitioners serve as experts who design and offer suitable interventions. The relationship between the two is akin to that of clients and experts. Although community members are involved in the process, this model largely follows a top-down approach. Participation is typically restricted to the implementation phase, with little involvement in problem identification or decision-making. As a result, the community acts more as a recipient of externally formulated solutions than as a driver of change.

Social action

Social action, known as Model C, popularised by Saul Alinsky, a pivotal figure in community organising in the United States. Model C offers a radical approach,



aiming to redistribute power from dominant elite groups to historically marginalised or oppressed communities. According to Alinsky, societal problems stem not simply from individual or community deficiencies, but from a concentration of unaccountable power (Schutz & Miller, 2015). As a response, community organizing becomes a means of resistance and confrontation. This model emphasises the development of critical awareness among oppressed communities and the mobilisation of collective action such as protests, advocacy

campaigns, and political pressure to challenge and alter existing power structures. Unlike Models A and B, which emphasise collaboration or technocratic solutions, Model C explicitly recognises conflict of interest as inherent in power relations and sees this conflict as the driving force for social change.

To identify which model of organising model is implemented in a particular community or organisation, Rothman provides 12 indicators. These differentiate the characteristics of Models A, B, and C are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. 12 indicators community organizing Jack Rothman

Indicator	Explanation	Model A	Model B	Model C
Goal categories of community	Assesses purposes: whether organising efforts prioritise participation or expert-driven	Emphasises participatory processes to build a self-reliant community and develop local leadership	Achieving goals that have been determined by practitioners	Process outcomes with the main goal of shifting power



Assumption about community structure and problem conditions	Reflects how society and issues are viewed	Community seen as fractured but potentially democratic and locally led	Community faces structural issues like poverty and inequality	Community is hierarchical with power imbalances and systemic inequality
Basic change strategy	Defines the primary method for change	Change result from direct involvement of members	Change is designed and implemented by external practitioners	Change means challenging oppression and mobilising mass
Change tactics and techniques	Describes methods and tools achieving change	Cooperative change through member deliberation	Cooperative change through technical analysis, research, and expert-led solutions	Protest, direct action, and confrontation to disrupt the status quo
Practitioner roles	Explain the practitioner's involvement	Practitioners as facilitators and community is the main actor	Practitioners lead and control the entire process	Practitioners act as an activist or advocates, siding with oppressed groups
Mediums of change	The scale of organising	Small, organised, and participatory groups	Large, formal, structured organisations	Mass organisation use to mobilise political power of the oppressed
Orientation toward power structures	Shows where power lies	Power is internal to the community and exercised collectively	Power is centred in practitioners or planners	Power lies outside and must be challenged through collective action
Boundaries of the community client system	Defines the scope of the organising target group	Based on geographic or local attachment	Based on specific group	Broad scope, targeting marginalised and oppressed group
Assumption regarding interest of community subparts	Details how different interest are managed	Conflicts resolved through participatory deliberation and consensus	Conflict managed top-down through rational and efficient decision-making	Conflicts should be addressed through confrontation and collective pressure



Conception of the public interest	Outlines how public interest is defined	Rationalist: discussion and majority agreement	Idealist: efficient decision-making by elites, professionals, and intellectuals	Realist: negotiation or confrontation between unequal group
Conception of the client population	Explain how communities are viewed by the practitioners	Clients are individuals with strengths needing empowerment	Clients are passive recipients of services	Clients are victims of injustice, needing support in struggle
Conception of the client role	Describe the client role in organising	Clients are active agents with the goal of achieving self-reliance	Clients are passive customers of professional services	Clients and practitioners act together to challenge unjust power structures

*Source: processed by the author (2024),
adapted from Rothman (1982)*

However, several critiques have been directed toward Rothman's models. Laing (2009) criticised Rothman's approach as reflecting cultural incapacity due to its lack of sensitivity to complex cultural contexts. The model is considered to overly generalise community organising strategies without adequately considering the values, beliefs, and cultural practices that influence group dynamics. In a diverse society like

Indonesia, a culturally grounded organising approach is crucial to address the shortcomings of the Rothman framework.

This paper examines the organising process of KWT Lestari using Rothman's twelve indicators to identify the organisational model applied. Furthermore, it explores the factors that have contributed to the development of KWT Lestari based on the identified



model. A qualitative method with a case study approach was employed to achieve this aim. This approach was chosen for its ability to reduce the distance between the researcher and the research subject, allowing for a closer relationship and in-depth exploration of the organising dynamics. It also facilitates a contextual understanding of how social processes emerge and develop within the community framework, including the cultural values implemented in the organising process.

To obtain rich and relevant data, this study involved interviews with five key informants who hold strategic roles within the KWT Lestari organisation: the head of KWT Lestari (Sri Hartanti), a practitioner (Untung Wijanarko), a management representative (Jumiyati), and two members (Rita Suratini and Ngatiyah). These informants were selected

for their capacity to provide comprehensive perspectives into the leadership, mentoring, management, and membership dynamics of the organisation.

Lestari Women's Farmers Group (KWT Lestari)

KWT Lestari is an organisation located in Tegalsari village, Pakembinangun, Pakem, Sleman. Since its establishment in 2019, this group has focused on organising its members through aloe vera cultivation. Under the leadership of Tanti, KWT Lestari has expanded beyond cultivation to the production of a variety of aloe vera-based products, which are marketed under its own brand.

The members' cultivation expertise has positioned Tegalsari as one of the main suppliers of aloe vera to supermarkets in Yogyakarta, earning the village the nickname "Aloe Vera village."

This recognition has enabled Tegalsari to become a centre for aloe vera cultivation training, with KWT Lestari members actively involved in facilitating training sessions across age groups. The village's reputation has brought both economic and social benefits to its members. Before determining the organisational model of KWT Lestari, it is important to understand the key stages of its formation and development.

First, the practitioner-led idea discussion. The idea to establish KWT Lestari originated from Untung Wijanarko, founder of Tani Organik Merapi (TOM) and a resident of Tegalsari. He identified a gap in the aloe vera supply chain in Yogyakarta. This idea was initially discussed with local leader Jumakir and entrepreneur Tanti, and later brought to broader forum, particularly during regular *rukun*

tetangga (RT) meetings.² The women of Tegalsari reached a collective agreement to establish the women's farmers group.

Second, fulfilling administrative requirements. The formation of a KWT requires compliance with Yogyakarta Mayor Regulation No. 128 of 2021. Key requirements include having a management structure, articles of association and bylaws, as well as a long-term organisational plan (Yogyakarta City Government, 2021). These requirements were met at the home of Tanti, with assistance from Suwarno, a field agricultural extension officer (*penyuluh pertanian lapangan/PPL*).

Third, aloe vera cultivation training. The aloe vera cultivation training was conducted using a

² Rukun Tetangga (RT) meetings are regular gatherings held by the smallest neighbourhood unit in Indonesia, where residents discuss local issues, organise community activities, coordinate social support, and strengthen community bonds through collective decision-making.



direct approach. Tanti facilitated access to training held in Kulon Progo, Wonosari, and Cangkringan. Following these sessions, KWT Lestari was officially formed in 2019.

Fourth, the initial organisation of KWT Lestari. The initial organisation of KWT Lestari still focused on aloe vera cultivation with various routine agendas, such as meetings, selling, and training sessions. These routines helped foster a strong sense of solidarity among members.

Fifth, the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic posed a serious challenge to the organisation. Restrictions on mobility led to decreased aloe vera demand, resulting in product waste and a loss of member engagement. Reduced face-to-face interaction and shifting priorities weakened internal cohesion. Many members abandoned cultivation, and group membership

declined significantly. Seeing this challenge, Tanti took a quick response to innovate and process aloe vera stems as an alternative.

Sixth, aloe vera processing. Drawing on previous training, Tanti led the effort to develop value-added aloe vera products such as chocolate, *dawet* (a traditional Indonesian drink), aloe vera crisps, and sticks. These initiatives revitalised the group and opened opportunities to participate in food fairs and events hosted by cooperatives and tourism authorities.

Seventh, network formation. In order to sustain its growth, KWT Lestari fosters partnerships and expand its reach through collaborations. The group also utilises social media for marketing to enhance its visibility and consumer base.



Result

This chapter outlines the organisational model applied by Tanti in forming and managing KWT Lestari, as part of an effort to mobilise women in Tegalsari village through aloe vera cultivation. The discussion includes the identification of the KWT Lestari's organisational model, the stages of the organisational flow, and the key actors involved at each stage. To determine the model used by KWT Lestari, this chapter employs an analytical framework based on Rothman's twelve indicators of community organising.

Goal categories of community action

The organisation process of KWT Lestari was initiated by Untung Wijanarko, a resident of Tegalsari village and founder of TOM. Untung saw a potential opportunity for aloe vera supplier

in Yogyakarta and brought this idea to the women of Tegalsari village. He presented the idea during an inter-neighbourhood forum involving representatives from each RT. The idea was well received, and the women gradually began to engage in collective activities to establish KWT Lestari.

Various collective activities were carried out in the establishment of KWT Lestari, such as the election of board members, the completion of administrative requirements, and the identification of training partners. At the beginning of the organising process, KWT Lestari successfully gathered 20 members, whose participation was driven by three main factors.

First, uniqueness. KWT Lestari's approach stood out, as no other village in the Pakembinangun sub-district had previously focused specifically on aloe vera cultivation. While



aloe vera had been cultivated individually in the past, this was the first time it was managed collectively. The unique nature of this initiative eventually led to Tegalsari village being recognised as the “Aloe Vera village,” a title that has brought numerous social and economic benefits to the local community.

Second, ease of cultivation. Aloe vera is easy to grow in various media, whether in pots or directly in the ground. Its low-maintenance nature made it especially appealing to the women of Tegalsari. As stated by Jumiyati,

“Rice is already common and its handling is a bit complicated. This one [aloe vera] is easier, that’s why I chose it.” (Interview with Jumiyati, a management representative of KWT Lestari, 11 July 2024).

Third, economic benefits. Although the primary aim of KWT Lestari was women’s empowerment rather than profit, the routine success of the cultivation process and subsequent harvesting gradually brought about tangible economic benefits. However, as the cultivation process ran smoothly and harvesting became routine, members began developing independent aloe vera-based businesses, contributing to the strengthening of their family economies.

Although the idea of aloe vera cultivation was initiated by Untung Wijanarko, the formation and growth of KWT Lestari were the results of the members’ own initiative and active participation. These women evolved from having little to no knowledge of aloe vera cultivation or community organising to becoming skilled in managing and marketing aloe vera

products, thanks to the training they received. The establishment of KWT Lestari was the result of a process that involved the active participation of its members. They were not merely passive recipients, but active agents working towards a shared goal. This organising approach, which emphasises the importance of process in building collective action, aligns closely with the principles of locality development, one of the models in Rothman's community organising framework, and reflects the approach led by Tanti.

Assumption concerning community structure and problem conditions

The process of organising KWT Lestari focuses on strengthening the capacity of each member. The capacity-building process has fostered the emergence of local leadership

rooted in the community context, most notably in the figure of Tanti. As the head of KWT Lestari, Tanti has played a pivotal role in mobilising members to actively participate not only in cultivation activities but also in the day-to-day management of the organisation. By fostering solidarity among members who were previously segmented along RT lines, KWT Lestari has become a collective space not only for cultivating aloe vera, but also forming a stronger social network. The success of KWT Lestari in encouraging the creation of local capacity and local leaders is a strategic step in supporting locality development.

Basic change strategy

Following the establishment of KWT Lestari and the emergence of local leaders, the dynamics of member participation became a crucial aspect in ensuring



the sustainability of the organisation. These participatory dynamics are key in assessing indicators of basic change strategies. Member participation in KWT Lestari can be observed through various phases of the organisational flow. First, discussion of the practitioners' idea. The idea of forming KWT Lestari, originally proposed by Untung Wijanarko was positively received by the women of Tegalsari village. Second, completion of administrative requirements. To meet the legal and procedural standards outlined in the Yogyakarta Mayor Regulation No. 128 of 2021, Tanti convened several meetings with members to complete the required documentation. This included defining the group's organisational structure, formulating definitive group plan and household budget, and drafting articles of association. Tanti also created space for

collaborative discussions around administrative matters, ensuring shared responsibility. Third, response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic posed a serious challenge to the continuity of KWT Lestari, primarily through disruptions in the aloe vera supply chain and the emergence of monopolistic practices by certain collectors. As market demand declined and internal tensions rose, many members lost motivation and began to neglect their aloe vera crops.

In response to these challenges, Tanti took the initiative to not only survive, but also continue to seek new opportunities through various innovations. Recognising that stagnation was not an option, she sought innovative ways to revitalise the group. Rather than relying solely on raw aloe vera sales, Tanti promoted product diversification. She initiated and

facilitated training in aloe vera processing, producing items such as nata de aloe, aloe vera sticks, chocolates, crackers, and *onde-onde* (traditional Indonesia snack) through various collaborations with relevant government agencies and local MSMEs. These innovations not only opened up new market opportunities but also rekindled the spirit of members who had waned due to the pandemic and conflicts of interest. Tanti's leadership has thus extended beyond administrative duties, positioning her as a key driver of change based on the needs and potential of the local community. The active involvement of the community at each stage, despite external challenges, shows that the organising carried out by Tanti, aligns with the indicators of the local organising model.

Characteristic change tactics and techniques

In leading the organisation of KWT Lestari, Tanti applied cooperative change tactics and techniques. The changes were based on joint decisions made through deliberation, ensuring that every member was involved and had a role in the decision-making process. Decisions were reached democratically through majority votes, thus aligning the organisation's trajectory with the needs and aspirations of its members. Tanti continuously adapted to changing situations and conditions by introducing organisational innovations. She consistently encouraged members to enhance their capacities through skills training, providing access to resources, and building collaborations with various external parties. These efforts not only enhanced individual competencies but also cultivated a shared



motivation among members to improve their quality of life. The cooperative nature of change management—through inclusive decision-making and continuous learning—highlights the participatory ethos of the organising process.

Salient practitioner roles

The establishment and development of KWT Lestari cannot be separated from the strategic involvement of practitioners, who played critical roles as facilitators and catalysts across different stages of the organisation's journey. These roles can be divided into three distinct periods: pre-formation, implementation, and processing of aloe vera. During pre-formation stage, there were four key practitioners were actively involved:

First, Untung Wijanarko, a founder of TOM. He acted as the initiator and coordinator behind the idea of establishing KWT Lestari. He noted,

"Indeed, I thought that the women farmers group (KWT) should have an organisation, so the organisation was formed with me as the coordinator. So, I acted as a facilitator, even though there was also an agricultural extension officer involved." (Interview with Untung Wijanarko, founder of TOM and key practitioner of KWT Lestari, 12 July 2024).

Second, Suwarno as the PPL from the Sleman Regency's agricultural services. He assisted with the administrative and technical requirements essential for formalising the group in accordance with relevant local regulations. Third, Imam Rodli as the owner of the aloe vera enterprise "Rama Vera".



He contributed significantly to training members in cultivation techniques and supported the initial planting efforts in Tegalsari village. Fourth, Maryanto as an aloe vera consultant. He provided technical guidance on cultivation challenges, such as underdeveloped fronds, wilting, and unsuitable planting media.

The next stage is implementation of KWT. At this stage, Untung continued his involvement by offering mentorship and advice on resolving organisational challenges. He is also a key actor in marketing aloe vera products during the early phases. Although KWT Lestari has since strengthened its internal marketing capacity, Tanti continues to manage product distribution centrally. This strategy is intended to

prevent internal competition and ensure that group's overarching goal, advancing all its members collectively, is achieved.

Although the practitioners involved come from various backgrounds, both public and private sectors, the interview results show that the approach used by Tanti in the organising process is the *jemput bola* method. This means that she actively seeks and invites practitioners with relevant experience and certification to be involved in the training. Instead of passively waiting for assistance, Tanti contacted experts to ensure that the aloe vera cultivation and processing process is carried out according to the right standards. KWT Lestari's success in involving many practitioners while maintaining its independence



reflects the effectiveness of the locality development approach that positions practitioners as movers and drivers.

Mediums of change

The organising process within KWT Lestari did not require such a large media platforms to achieve the strategies and goals that have been set. Instead, the strength of the organisation resided in the collective action and active participation of its members. At its inception, KWT Lestari comprised 20 members, each of whom played a vital role in shaping the group's direction. Of course, active participation must have a trigger. Since the beginning, Tanti has always involved members in every discussion and decision, such as discussions related to the election of administrators, the formulation of organisational statutes (AD/ART), and the establishment of shared goals.

The involvement of members from the beginning has made each member understand the common goals and have a sense of responsibility for the sustainability of the organisation. This active participation encourages members to take the steps necessary to achieve common goals, create solid cooperation patterns, and strengthen social relations within the organisation. The medium of change that prioritises collective efforts to achieve shared goals is a hallmark of community development.

Orientation toward power structure

Active participation from each member ensured that power was not centralised in Tanti or any practitioner, but was instead evenly distributed among the members. With this distributed power, every member had the opportunity

to voice their opinions in the decision-making process of KWT Lestari. Tanti played a crucial role in ensuring that all group members were actively involved in the organising process. To encourage member participation, Tanti uses various methods such as regular group discussions, equitable task distribution, and rotational leadership in certain activities so that other members can feel responsible and hone their leadership skills. In this way, Tanti not only strengthens group solidarity, but also fosters a sense of belonging and self-confidence among KWT Lestari members. This has shown that power is evenly distributed in KWT Lestari. This is in accordance with the locality development approach that places power in the community itself. Tanti, as the chairperson, has succeeded in facilitating the process so that all members have a role in the decisions taken.

Boundaries of the community client system

KWT Lestari's constituency is geographically defines, with membership limited to residents of Tegalsari village, specifically from RT 19, 20, 21, and 22 of Padukuhan Demen, Pakembinangun Sub-district, Sleman Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta. Far from being a limitation, this boundary serves as a strategic foundation for fostering strong interpersonal connections and facilitating effective coordination. In line with this, Speer and Hughey (1995), in their study of 14 community organising efforts in the United States, explain that community organising that builds on shared values and emotional ties tends to have a more sustainable impact than those driven solely by rational responses to community issues.



Communities grounded in shared values and emotional bonds are more likely to foster lasting cohesion and commitment.

By prioritising community-based values, fostering emotional solidarity, and strengthening geographic ties, KWT Lestari demonstrates the effectiveness of Model A of community organising. It illustrates how leveraging local potential, preserving local wisdom, and encouraging comprehensive community involvement can generate significant impact.

Assumption regarding interest of community sub-parts

In a group with diverse membership, differences in interests are inevitable. Within KWT Lestari, these differences emerged between housewives

and working mothers, primarily due to variations in availability of time. As one member, Rita explained,

“Well, maybe because after coming home from work, they’re tired and don’t want to get involved in the group’s activities (Interview with Rita, member of KWT Lestari, 12 July 2024).”

However, participation in the organising process is crucial to ensure that knowledge and skills related to aloe vera cultivation and processing are inclusively disseminated, contributing to equitable progress for all members. Seeing the differences in time availability, Tanti chose a strategic step by assigning responsibility for each KWT Lestari activity to different members, ensuring that everyone maintained a sense of connection to the group regardless of their time constraints.



To bring all members together and boost enthusiasm in the organising process, Tanti frequently organised refreshment programs. These refresher activities take various forms, such as conducting comparative studies, holding training events, or other events that can bring KWT members closer together. Through these efforts, members could refocus on achieving the collective goals agreed upon at the beginning of KWT's formation. These inclusive community activities are reflective of the locality development approach, which seeks to enhance participation and social integration through collaborative efforts that accommodate diverse needs.

Conception of the public interest

In KWT Lestari, the public interest is not pre-given, but is formed through a deliberative

process that emphasises the importance of active participation from all members. This involvement is realised through consultative forums that provide space for dialogue, allowing members to identify and agree upon shared needs considered essential for the advancement of KWT Lestari. These participatory forums function as a filtering mechanism to formulate policies based on collective priorities and benefits. This process makes deliberation not only an arena for discussion, but as a means of social control that ensures that decisions taken represent the interests of the wider group, thereby filtering out personal interests.

The interests formed from the dynamic interaction of members with a bottom-up approach are in line with the principle of locality development. Thus, active participation becomes an



important foundation in forming consensus, strengthening social solidarity and increasing the legitimacy of group decisions.

Conception of the client population

Prior of the formal establishment of KWT Lestari, Untung Wijanarko, as a practitioner, recognised the women of Tegalsari as an active community involved in various village activities such as regular inter-neighbourhood meetings, community service, *karawitan* (traditional music), *yasinan* (religious recitations), *posbindu* (integrated development post for non-communicable diseases), *posyandu* (integrated health post aimed primarily at pregnant women, infants, toddlers, and children), and others. However, their engagement had yet to be channelled into economically productive efforts. As Untung stated,

"They have a strong spirit to move forward, but they have not yet been optimally empowered." (Interview with Untung Wijanarko, founder of TOM and key practitioner of KWT Lestari, 12 July 2024).

Through structured organising, KWT Lestari evolved into an independent and self-managed group, supported by strong local leadership and administrative frameworks. Member actively engaged in achieving common goals, developing product, conducting training, and managing member administration and organisational management. This underscores the empowerment ethos of the locality development model, wherein KWT Lestari members are not passive recipients but rather co-creators of their progress.



Conception of the client role

Members of KWT Lestari exemplify the role of active clients who develop the organisation. Their proactive involvement is closely linked to Tanti's effective leadership. As Untung mentioned,

"Compared to other KWTs, Tegalsari is the most active, because especially the one who coordinates is the chairperson, and the chairperson is active." (Interview with Untung Wijanarko, founder of TOM and key practitioner of KWT Lestari, 12 July 2024).

This statement emphasises the pivotal role of leadership in directing coordination and building collective spirit as a key element in the sustainability of community organisations.

Tanti's leadership has not only succeeded in establishing a stable organisational structure,

but also managed to cultivate emotional attachment and shared collective responsibility among members. A community that is able to build its capacity independently and collectively and does not depend on the role of practitioners reflects the locality development approach. The synergy between strong leadership, active participation, and collective action has made KWT Lestari able to survive and develop compared to other groups. KWT Lestari is a real example of the success of organising based on community participation.

Based on the existing findings, it can be stated that the organising process of KWT Lestari represents a real practice of the locality development approach. Three key elements, namely transformative leadership, active member involvement, and collective action, play a central role



in encouraging community sustainability and growth. The strategic role played by Untung as the initiator and Tanti as the chairperson of KWT Lestari has created a conducive environment for member participation in managing and developing the group independently. The success of KWT Lestari in facing various dynamics and challenges shows how solidarity and collaboration between members can strengthen social resilience.

Conclusion

The organisation of KWT Lestari located in Tegalsari, under the leadership of Tanti serves as a

concrete example how grassroots community organising can be achieved through the application of Rothman locality development model. By analysing structure, dynamics, cultural, practices, and participation of the organisation through the lens of Rothman's 12 indicators, the alignment between theoretical frameworks and practical implementation becomes evident. Table 2 below outlines how each of these twelve indicators is reflected in the organising practices of KWT Lestari, highlighting the strong alignment between theory and field realities.

Table 2. Results of the analysis of Jack Rothman 12 indicator

Indicator	Model A	Findings	Comparison
Goals categories of community	Emphasises participatory processes for self-reliance	Collective aloë vera cultivation initiated by Untung developed through active participation of women led by local leadership, Sri Hartanti	Strong participatory approach with local leadership driving empowerment, matching Model A's locality development focus



Assumption about community structure and problem conditions	Community is traditional, led by informal leaders	KWT Lestari prioritized enhancing the abilities of its members which facilitated the rise of local leadership through Sri Hartanti. Through uniting members from diverse RT groups to develop a collective sense of identity	Both view community as traditional with local leaders playing central roles, emphasis on capacity and solidarity building. This reflects Model A perspective
Basic change strategy	Change emerges through members involvement	Members actively participate in organisation activities, decision-making, and innovation, guided by Tanti	Aligns with Model A direct involvement strategy; where leadership actively engages members in community-driven change
Change tactics and techniques	Cooperative change through member deliberation	Decisions are made collectively by members discussing their needs and voting as a group	Matches Model A cooperative, participatory tactics emphasising inclusive decision-making
Practitioner roles	Practitioners act as facilitators, with community serving as main actor	Practitioners support KWT Lestari while the group remains independent. Tanti plays a key role by actively inviting experts and leading initiatives to improve members skills and capabilities. Her leadership helps members develop abilities in aloe vera cultivation, encouraging their independence both as individuals and as a group	Consistent with Model A facilitator role. The community takes the lead in organising itself with Tanti supporting and encouraging their active participation
Mediums of change	Small, organised, participatory groups	KWT Lestari was established with 20 active members who were deeply involved in decision-making and shared responsibilities	Matches Model A emphasis on small-scale, participatory organising with shared ownership led by local leadership



Orientation toward power structure	Power is distributed and controlled within the group	Power is decentralised and evenly shared among members; Tanti facilitates inclusive decision-making, promotes task sharing, and encourages leadership rotation to foster responsibility, confidence, and group solidarity	This aligns with Model A focus on local control and community empowerment
Boundary definition of community client system or constituency	Defining the spatial and social limits of the community	Membership is geographically focused on Tegalsari village residents, strengthening local social bonds and coordination	Community organising is locally bounded, leveraging local potential and social capital
Assumption regarding interests of community subparts	Acknowledging diversity and varying interests within the community	Recognises diversity in member interests and time availability and addresses this by distributing responsibilities and organising inclusive refresher activities to maintain enthusiasm and collective focus	Assumes diversity within community; uses inclusive strategies to address varied interests
Conception of public interest	Formation of shared goals and collective priorities through participation	Collective interests are actively formed through deliberative, participatory forums, ensuring consensus and social control. The decisions made reflect broad group interests, not only individual	Public interest is formed through collective participation and deliberation. This process strengthens group cohesion and encourages shared responsibility



Conception of client population	How the community members are perceived in terms of activity and potential	Women in Tegalsari had many group activities but were not well-optimised. Through KWT Lestari they became independent and actively managed their own products and training, showing that people's strengths can grow with proper support and empowerment	Through proper organising, individuals with strong potential were able to develop their strengths. This aligns with Model A view that communities need support rather than replacement
Conception of client role	Role of community members in the organising process (active vs passive)	Members act as active organisers, not merely beneficiaries. Tanti's leadership mobilises members effectively, fostering collective responsibility and emotional attachment, leading to sustainable and independent capacity building	Clients are active participants and leaders in the organising process, promoting sustainability

Based on the analysis of the 12 indicators from Jack Rothman's locality development model, this study found that the organisational development of KWT Lestari in Tegalsari is primarily driven by three interrelated factors: visionary leadership, active participation, and collective action. Visionary leadership from both the

chairperson of KWT Lestari, Tanti and Untung forms the foundation for fostering enthusiasm among members. Tanti continuously facilitates and organises the members of Tegalsari, building a strong sense of commitment. This commitment, in turn, enables active participation. Despite challenges in the number of active members, KWT Lestari



members have demonstrated meaningful engagement, both directly and indirectly. They have succeeded in becoming agents of change, rather than merely beneficiaries. The application of the 12 indicators has highlighted how joint efforts in towards shared goals have a major impact on KWT Lestari, fostering not only individual development but also collective group advancement. Collective action has proven effective, with joint activities driving members towards improved social and economic opportunities.

This community-based approach offers clear advantages over a top-down approach. The experience of KWT Lestari shows that when members are given space to actively participate in the planning and implementation of development, the results are more sustainable. KWT Lestari reminds us of the importance of collective awareness and

member participation in creating more meaningful change. The strong sense of ownership within the organisation forms the basis for overcoming challenges and creating new opportunities. Ultimately, this approach brings positive impacts on both economic conditions and social well-being of its members.





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