

THE RESILIENCE OF URBAN KAMPONG COMMUNITY IN AFTERMATH THE PANDEMIC

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Abstract

The impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic have struck the economic and public health of urban residents. As a community who live in densely populated area around Pasar Besar Malang, kampong inhabitants must cope with the outbreak as well as recover in aftermath the pandemic using their own resources. This article investigated the role of the collective memory contributed forming local knowledge to make the best way to deal with the pandemic turbulences as well as how people started to initiate resilience using the urban infrastructure resources in post outbreak. Utilizing the qualitative method, the results show two essential findings. First, the collective memory of the past plague was absent in communities' everyday life for a long time of period which made people have no simple guidance to overcome the pandemic impacts. The politics of ethnic segregation in housing during Colonial Era contribute for keeping distance people from the outbreak history. Second, several urban infrastructures such as clean water supply and public electricity which were properly provided for kampong community devoted in composing resilience during until after the pandemic. Ultimately, using those physical infrastructures the social structures were transformed.

Keywords: *collective memory; kampong; post-Pandemic; resilience; urban.*

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on urban communities, which is indicated by an increase in poverty rates in poor and developing countries (Martínez & Short, 2021). The pandemic's worse effects have occurred among social groups in the lowest stratum of urban social structures, such as minorities, migrant groups, and urban poor which are due to their limited access to basic infrastructure (Sharifi & Khavarian-Garmsir, 2020), such as healthcare insurance, clean water, and adequate housing. The stigma attached to Covid-19 patients and healthcare workers exacerbates the social impact and worsens the response to the pandemic (Bagcchi, 2020). People will begin to hide their symptoms, avoid

medical treatment and conceal contact tracing to evade the stigma (Villa et al., 2020). The combination of several factors such as high population density, low access to basic infrastructure, and poverty make policies are increasingly difficult to be implemented such as social distancing and quarantine, as seen in slum areas in India (Wasdani & Prasad, 2020).

The economic impacts of the outbreak seen in urban community in Malang, East Java, Indonesia. The Malang City Central Statistics Agency (BPS) recorded that poverty rates increased by 4.44% from the previous rate of 4.07% in 2020 (Ramadhan, 2021). The main economic centre of the city, such as the Pasar Besar (Big Market) of Malang, also faced a slowdown. In September 2020, traditional market vendors in Pasar Besar had a 50%

decrease in their income (Supriyatno, 2020). This economic decline also affected to the communities who live around Pasar Besar made people must adjust to the crisis. Most of the population relied on the informal economy of the market, such as being traders, parking attendants, laborers, and various other services. Consequently, when the pandemic hit, market activities dropped drastically, forcing residents to seek new jobs such as becoming online motorcycle taxi drivers, even though the income was much lower than working in the market.¹

At the same time, there was also a lack of clarity in pandemic information. For example, on July 19, 2021, the Malang City Government recorded 0 deaths, while 26 bodies were queued for burial on the same day (CNN Indonesia, 2021). The lack of transparency also occurred at the community level made the information circulation about positive Covid-19 cases only distributed through rumours passed from person to person or in WhatsApp groups among residents. Eventually, the transparency problem generated stigma for survivors, which made contact tracing more difficult and ultimately hindered pandemic control efforts (Villa et al., 2020). On the other hand, amidst these problematic situations, kampong communities showed resilience in building social systems in post Covid-19.

The aim of this paper was to investigate the resilience of the kampong community in Malang City, in the aftermath Covid-19 pandemic. Choosing Malang City is essential because it was the first place in Indonesia that experienced a plague epidemic during the Dutch colonial era. Malang is an important location to study the history of epidemics in Indonesia (Luwis, 2020). As a place

close to the economic activities, the kampong around Pasar Besar was also an important consideration in this article.

The concept of resilience explained the relationship between community development issues and disaster preparedness, in which the community is vulnerable to various disturbances. This concept was used to analyse how and why a (social) system responds to disruptions (Vale, 2014). It is closely related with social setting as well as linked with ecological factor of a community (Wright, 2022). However, community involvement is crucial in creating urban resilience (Shaw et al., 2016).

Meanwhile, several studies have shown the resilience of urban communities was built during and after Covid-19 pandemic. This is exemplified in the work undertaken by Banai who described relation between urban community resilience with urban planning, such as the function and location of urban areas (place matters), cyberspace, population density, access to public facilities, and the city center area (Banai, 2020). From a city planning perspective, Kakderi et al. found that urban resilience is related to population mobility, as it is associated with social distancing regulations. A sample of 50 cities around the world showed that city residents and transportation managers made adjustments to transportation facilities when there were social distancing policies implemented (Kakderi et al., 2021).

From a macro perspective, the capacity of a democratic and integrated city government became an important factor in controlling the pandemic, although it may be difficult to prevent it in the early stages of the outbreak (Chu et al., 2021). Meanwhile, at the mezzo level,

¹ The data which were released by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of Malang City only recorded population density at the district level. The Klojen District, where this sub district is located, is the the highest population density in

Malang City. There were 24,921 people per km² in 2020 (Central Statistics Agency of Malang City, 2020). Therefore, there is no data on population density by sub-district unit (kelurahan).

resilience strengthening also carried out by the Islamic organization Muhammadiyah using *da'wah* to raise awareness among the *ummah* about the dangers of Covid-19. Muhammadiyah established task forces as well as collaborated with several organizations such as the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) of Indonesia, the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, and USAID (Qodarsasi et al., 2021).

Even though the pandemic has over, and government restriction policy has been lifted, urban community must cope with post Covid-19 circumstances, such as infrastructure services, economic declining, symptoms of horizontal conflict, and psychological stress. Payonga and Ihara found out that in post Covid-19 sustainable electricity policy has promoted by local people in Philippines (Payonga & Ihara, 2023). In addition, disaster preparedness policy has been improved after the outbreak (Maquiling et al., 2023). In a different level of analysis, Gizdic, et al pointed out that social connectedness has been promoted to prevent mental health issue in Croatia (Gizdic et al., 2023). Nevertheless, through the pandemic disaster, it is illustrated that development projects create inequality in power relations which actually creates an uncertain future. Leach et al suggested that in order for resilience to be built, development projects should be more inclusive and egalitarian (Leach et al., 2021).

From the previous research above, there are still limitations in the study of resilience issues in the context kampong community after outbreak from a micro-level perspective and based on the experiences of community members. The micro point of view is important to complement existing research and should be included as part of the resilience model carried out by urban communities. The present perspective is in line with Sharifi's recommendation that research on

resilience with a social dimension perspective must continue to be conducted (Sharifi, 2020).

Methods

The current study utilized the constructivism paradigm which assumes that individuals always try to understand the world in which they live (Cresswell, 2017). Paradigmatically, the purpose of this research focused on understanding the formation of kampong community resilience in aftermath pandemic, which has become a game changer for society at all levels to adapt in the current pressing situation. Therefore, we identified the processes and forms of resilience as actions in responding to the ongoing Covid-19 as well as after the outbreak. The qualitative approach has strengths in understanding meaning and specific contexts in participant actions, identifying unanticipated phenomena in building grounded theories, understanding the processes by which events and actions occur, and building causal explanations (Maxwell, 1996; Miles et al., 2014).

The present research was conducted in one of kampong in Malang City, East Java Province, Indonesia. The kampong is situated in a densely populated area and the people are characterized by urban communities relying on medium to small-scale trade for their livelihoods. In the period from 2020 to 2023, the complex impacts of health, social, and economic issues began to show critical signs. This was marked by the breakdown of trust among community groups due to the stigmatization of Covid-19 survivors, which disrupted the process of pandemic control.

The primary data was obtained from a semi-structured interview process. The informants consisted of residents of the kampong around Pasar Besar, including those who are working as

market traders, services, civil services, and housewives. Data were also obtained from the non-participant observation process. During the outbreak, the non-participant observation was carried out to determine the daily interaction processes amidst government restrictions. Both processes were carried out by following health protocols such as wearing masks, regularly washing hands, using hand sanitizers, and maintaining distance to prevent the spread of Covid-19. However, when the restriction policy was over, we conducted interview and observation in more flexible patterns.

Results and Disussion

The Untraceable Collective Memory

The Plague outbreak, also known as the Pest, was recorded to have occurred in Malang from 1910 to 1916. It was caused by rats carrying the *Yersinia pestis* bacteria, which were present in imported rice from Burma, India, and China. The rice distribution from Malang to Wlingi and Blitar was cancelled due to floods on route. As a result, the rice carrying the bacteria accumulated in a warehouse at the Malang rail station. Initially, there were no suspicions about the outbreak until 17 people from Turen died with fever symptoms that lasted for several days. From Malang, the Pest disease eventually spread to several cities in East Java, such as Blitar, Tulungagung, Madiun, Surabaya, and some other cities (Janti, 2019; Luwis, 2020). In handling this outbreak, the colonial government moved slowly, and the disease eventually spread to other towns. It is important to understand that *Afdeeling* Malang was a significant location in the early history of the spread of the Pest outbreak in Nusantara (Luwis, 2020).

So, what was the epidemiological situation of the Pest in the kampong around the Pasar Besar? Luwis's social history perspectives indicated that the

Pest spread faster in the indigenous (*bumiputra*) settlements with negligible sanitation facilities and air circulation. These houses were usually made of bamboo, which became the nesting ground for rats. In contrast, the colonial residential areas around the Pasar Besar were considered slow in the spread of the disease (Luwis, 2020) because it had better housing and sanitation.

Our findings show that the social history of the community's experience to the Pest outbreak 1910 is still related with current response to the Covid-19. However, Pasar Besar area was free from the Pest outbreak led to the absence of collective memories among the residents about the current pandemic. None of the informants we interviewed mentioned and remembered the history of the Pest outbreak in 1910. It is as if the Pest epidemic in Malang was never part of their ancestors' stories, leaving no lasting impression on the informants. This can be attributed to two important factors. Firstly, the location near the economic source was already free from the Pest epidemic during the colonial era, making it unnecessary to be passed down as a part of their heritage. In terms of urban planning, this area had been planned with a clean water network and sanitation that had been built. The concrete houses also inhibited the growth of rats as carriers of the Pest bacteria. The physical infrastructures, such as sanitation and concrete buildings, made this area able to be free from the outbreak. This factor apparently made the residents lack any experience and collective memory of the epidemic that needed to be passed down to their descendants.

Secondly, the ethnic composition of the kampong had changed. By the end of 1910, the area was inhabited by Chinese people due to the Dutch colonial government's policy of segregation (Luwis, 2020) that separated residential

areas based on race groups in certain areas. Meanwhile, at present, the ethnic composition in the kampong is more diverse, such as Chinese, Javanese, Arab, and Madurese have lived together. The change in demographic composition seems to have reduced memories about past epidemics. With the change in ethnic composition, experiences of epidemics became varied, which ultimately never became a collective memory that was passed down from generation to generation.

The of knowledge about the 1910 plague has led to a minimal capacity of the social system to face disaster impacts, including pandemics. This condition is certainly not an ideal situation as proposed by Atta-ur-Rahman (Atta-ur-Rahman et al., 2016) who assumed that resilience is related to both collective and individual capabilities, which are tested over time and related to forming the city's social history. Resilience derived from knowledge becomes a source of mobilization for individuals to enhance their ability to face changes in their surrounding environment (Shave et al., 2009). This collective memory contributes to form knowledge about epidemics, including ways to overcome them. This knowledge can be passed down from ancestors to descendants as an important factor for actors to generate resilience.

The unavailability of collective memory about past outbreak that could be used as knowledge to face the current pandemic can be understood as vulnerability. This means that urban communities are vulnerable due to the lack of shared knowledge about pandemic. Vulnerability is related to the history of the community, which is formed over time and ultimately shapes the experience of the community (Bankoff, 2003). It encompasses the capacity and ability of groups or individuals to anticipate and deal with natural hazards.

Many factors that influence vulnerability, whether it be group or individual factors, such as knowledge, social class, gender, ethnicity, political systems, government policies, and so on (Blaikie et al., 2005; Oliver-Smith, 2002). The combination of these factors is what causes different groups to have different levels of vulnerability.

Therefore, the collective memories of the community can be employed as a source of knowledge in dealing with outbreak. Conversely, if the community does not have a collective memory of past, then it can be identified that they are vulnerable. Halbwachs (1980) identified that collective memory exists within a social group. This is different from history, which is a "dead frame" of the past that is filled with important events and dates but forgets the existence of humans as actors. A collective memory only becomes history when the people who lived it die. Humans use their collective memory to deal with current and future problems (Wang, 2008). Thus, the collective memory shapes the ability to overcome the impact of pandemics in the present.

Through collective memory, it was possible for kampong residents to develop resilience. It presents community members as active subjects with a certain capacity to cope with, respond to, and recover from disasters (Shaw et al., 2016), including pandemics. Therefore, the knowledge from collective memory of past outbreaks is influential in forming the resilience during and after the Covid-19. Conversely, our findings showed that when there is no experience in facing past outbreaks, individuals lack the preparation to face the pandemic and circumstances after the outbreak. Yet, by utilizing the knowledge that comes from collective memory, the community can at least understand how to prevent disease spread with the resources available.

Resilience is influenced by internal factors within the community, such as the ability of community members to face disaster events and social ties within the social group, as well as external factors such as networks with external communities (Shaw et al., 2016; Wright, 2022). Knowledge of pandemics derived from the collective memory of the community is an important internal factor that can be used by the kampong people to cope with disaster and social change after the calamity.

As a note, the knowledge derivates from collective memory is not a scientific one which obtained from medical or public health sciences. The information contains experiences passed down through generations related to epidemic events that shape the city's history. Narratives, mostly derived from oral sources, are present and preserved through stories of past experiences, museums, memorials, songs, and other sources.

Resilience amid Congested Urban Living Spaces

As a densely populated area, the houses in kampong around Pasar Besar look crowded. However, we could not find official data on population density from the local government, and we relied on evidence from interviews and observations. We found that although the residents live in densely populated kampong, adequate physical infrastructures enable urban resilience to emerge.

The local people referred to their kampong as the direction of the compass with Pasar Besar as a pole for the direction, such as kampung *wetan pasar* (east of the market), *kidul pasar* (south of the market), and *kulon pasar* (west of the market). They always used cardinal directions to name their areas, rather than the official names of their

neighbourhoods. Geographic knowledge seemed easier to understand and was chosen as the everyday language of the community over administrative name. When entering the kampong, it is easy to find houses that are erected tightly together. The width of the alleyways is no more than 4 meters and motorcycles were parked there. It is common to find old concrete houses that are inhabited by several families beneath one roof. Most of these old architectures have been modified to partition them into several smaller houses. One old house building, usually more than 200 m², can be divided into 2 to 3 smaller houses, each with a size of approximately 40 m². This location is also crowded with relatively new two-floors houses, mostly with 2 to 3 bedrooms and inhabited by six or more family members. It is not uncommon for these partitioned houses to be inhabited by more than one nuclear family.

The informants had an interpretation regarding the correlation between population density in urban kampong and the spread of the pandemic. They stated that the high population density worsened the situation. The closeness of the kampong settlement to the market, hence requiring them to keep alert to other people. The mobility of people who enter and exit from Pasar Besar to kampong and the density of settlement, exacerbated the plague.

The situation above is worsened by some people who cannot believe the risk of outbreak. They can easily come and go from the kampong disobey health protocols such as wearing masks. Meanwhile, several hoaxes like conspiracy of virus dan vaccine were continually spread through social media. Those complex problems are hard to be controlled because considering the kampong is located close to the market that makes many people come and go

from this location. Once upon a time an elderly person was diagnosed Covid-19 positive. Unfortunately, because he lived in the middle of neighbours who did not believe in the pandemic, he did not dare to call an ambulance in an emergency. The old man finally had to come to the hospital alone by motorbike. Fortunately, the availability of clean water or electricity supply help him and his family in his curing the disease.

Urban communities who relied on economic on traditional market activities have been seriously hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. Pasar Besar Malang, which suddenly became deserted due to social distancing policies, has declined its microeconomic activities. It occurred because most of the residents' livelihoods come from market informal activities. Other impacts can be seen in the emergence of stigma against survivors and their families due to a lack of information, which in turn hinders the outbreak control.

However, as part of the history of a city inhabited by a multi-ethnic population and a center of the economy since the colonial era, the kampong has been facilitated by a network of clean water pipelines and adequate sanitation. The other physical infrastructures have been already provided such as an adequate electrical network. Our informants proved that the clean water and electricity distribution rarely disrupted.

It is undeniable that kampong surrounding Pasar Besar was formed during the colonial era. Their history was inseparable from the segregation policy were formed through a settlement pattern based on ethnicity. European residents occupied elite residential areas, while Chinese, Arab, and *Bumiputra* (indigenous people) lived in kampong (Colombijn, 2014; Sullivan, 1986). However, the composition of urban

settlements changed after independence era. House grouping was no longer based on ethnicity, but on social class (Colombijn, 2014). Apparently, there was a change in the population composition of kampong surrounding Pasar Besar after independence, which made the settlement not only occupied by Chinese but also by Javanese, Arab, and Madurese ethnic groups. As an economic centre, Pasar Besar has become a factor in attracting people from different ethnic groups to migrate and settle in it.

Thus, the migration process in turn created population density. Simply put, the pandemic situation in this urban community was exacerbated by the population density, as in Alexander's study (2003). Nevertheless, resilience was formed by adequate infrastructures. This depiction shows that in its process, resilience was also developed by the community, which is the "ability of social systems, communities, or societies to absorb, resist, accommodate, and recover from the effects of disasters in a timely and efficient manner, by restoring functions within the society" (Shaw et al., 2016). With such proper infrastructure services, an individual could easily access clean water as part of health protocols, utilize electricity for online schooling for their children, or start the online shop.

The concept of resilience initially originated from ecological studies (Wright, 2022), which examined how natural ecosystems transform in order to find a balance point (Miller et al., 2010). Subsequently, social scientists began to develop this theory by counting human factors as an essential aspect, which means that there is an interconnection between social and ecological matters (Amir, 2018). Urban infrastructure such as clean water networks, sanitation, and electricity networks in this article are assumed as non-natural factors that are utilized by kampong community in dealing

with pandemics. Those infrastructures are considered as ecological aspects that interconnect with human life.

The urban infrastructures created fully prepared kampong community to maintain public health, or to switch jobs, even without collective memory in facing pandemics. For instance, water and sanitation facilitated urban kampong families in keeping health protocol. In addition, good electricity networks supported changes in various economic and online educational activities. In the long term after the pandemic ends, the availability and easy access to urban infrastructure services enable kampong communities to build resilience. Those infrastructures such as electricity and internet networks are able to help people in social transformation after the outbreak. For instance, people are starting to become familiar with online trading rather than just relying on the Pasar Besar. This finding reflects that urban resilience during and after pandemic is not only strategy but it is a potential to transform the social structure (Wright, 2022).

However, the dense living space has already become challenge to urban resilience model. Likewise, the absence of collective memory of pandemic also provides valuable lessons for the formation of knowledge about pandemics which ultimately shapes the resilience.

Thus, the collective memory of kampong community in coping with pandemic shapes the city history because it cannot be separated from the occurrence of previous disease outbreaks (Alexander, 2003; Martínez & Short, 2021; Santiago-Alarcon & MacGregor-Fors, 2020). The history of city development around the world demonstrates that rapid urban growth as well as the emergence of densely populated settlements correlate with the presence of pandemic (UN-Habitat, 2021)

as well as social transformation in aftermath the outbreak. However, it seemed as the struggles of kampong peoples in dealing with the pandemic were not seen as a vital process to form the city's history. Through this article, we tried to dismantle that the kampong community's effort in post pandemic is relevant to illustrates how urban resilience is shaped. Utilizing urban resources such as public infrastructures, the inhabitants have transformed into a resilient society using their own potential.

Conclusion

The pandemic had negative impacts to urban kampong residents. Social distancing policies, on the one hand, could slow the spread of the virus, but it hindered economic activity. Social change after Covid-19 also force people to transform to new live. Therefore, kampong people who live around the Pasar Besar faced with two major problems: public health and economic sectors.

At the beginning of the pandemic, it appeared that community difficult to adapt with outbreak. It was due to the unavailability of the collective memory of past plague that possibly provided shared knowledge for dealing with the current pandemic even though Malang is considered as an important place in the history of the Pes epidemic 1901. Ethnic segregation policies, such as grouping settlements based on specific races have been important factors in the absence of collective memory of the past outbreak. Those factors made individuals vulnerable due to unavailability of shared memory which could not have been a resource for forming knowledge in the present.

Nevertheless, the availability of physical infrastructure such as clean water and electricity networks can support the community resilience. This resilience put individual as actor who uses

capabilities to shape the resilience to cope with the pandemic's impacts as well as in post-Covid-19. By utilizing the urban infrastructures, the social structure and function of the urban kampong begin to be recovered.

The perspective in this article only focuses on the micro view of the kampong inhabitant. Further research is essential to be conducted from different perspectives, such as the government's role in handling social transformation after the outbreak, the contribution of civil society organizations in addressing the pandemic's impacts, or other perspectives related to urban community resilience.

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