

Institutionalizing Community Empowerment in City Planning: An Analysis Of Surabaya's Cas Program

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Abstract

This study investigates the contribution of the Cangkrukan Arek Suroboyo (CAS) Program to community empowerment particularly youth in the context of Surabaya's urban development planning. In response to the multifaceted challenges posed by rapid urbanization, community participation has become a critical pillar in the formulation of inclusive and sustainable urban policies. The CAS Program represents an innovative participatory mechanism initiated by the Surabaya City Government to foster dialogic communication between citizens and local authorities, rooted in local cultural practices. Employing a qualitative research design, this study collected data through in-depth interviews, surveys, and document analysis. Findings reveal that community empowerment through the CAS Program encompasses five key dimensions: cognitive, psychological, organizational, socio-economic, and participatory. The program has demonstrated effectiveness in enhancing youth knowledge, self-efficacy, active engagement, and decision-making capacity at the grassroots level. Furthermore, CAS has fostered social cohesion, strengthened individual and collective capacities, and cultivated a participatory ecosystem that positions youth as agents of urban transformation. These findings suggest that the CAS Program can serve as a replicable model for sustainable and inclusive community empowerment in urban governance.

Keywords: CAS Program, Community Empowerment, Participatory Planning, Urban Governance, Youth Participation

1. Introduction

Urban development is a complex and dynamic process involving the planning, management, and implementation of various aspects, from infrastructure to improving the quality of life for the community (Ardianti & Eprilianto, 2022). Good urban development must also consider environmental sustainability, such as natural resource management, pollution reduction, and improving public transportation and energy efficiency (Alamanda Putri et al., 2021). The right approach to urban



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development can create better places to live, strengthen community ties, and support the long-term well-being of all residents (Kelvin et al., 2022). Urban development, especially in large cities like Surabaya, must be able to address the challenges of increasing urbanization, rapid population growth, and various complex social and economic issues. Furthermore, development based on community empowerment will ensure that development programs not only prioritize the interests of the government or a handful of parties, but also directly address the voices and needs of the community.

According to Law Number 40 of 2009 concerning Youth, youth are Indonesian citizens entering a crucial period of growth and development, aged between 16 (sixteen) and 30 (thirty) years (Sumiyati et al., 2023). Therefore, on September 30, 2024, the Surabaya government launched the CAS (Cangkrukan Arek Suroboyo) program to encourage active community involvement in every stage of development planning, implementation, and evaluation (Wulandari et al., 2021). Community empowerment through the CAS program is expected to address these issues by providing adequate training, education, and access to information (Siregar, 2020). This program also aims to create collective awareness among the community regarding the importance of their participation in development, as well as build individual and group capacity to manage existing resources more efficiently (Andriyan et al., 2024). Empowerment focuses not only on economic or social aspects, but also on political and social justice aspects. As public awareness of the importance of development planning based on their aspirations increases, the CAS Program is also expected to strengthen the relationship between the community and the city government.

Community empowerment through the CAS Program is expected to address these issues by providing adequate training, education, and access to information. The program also aims to raise collective awareness among communities about the importance of their participation in development and to build individual and group capacity to manage existing resources more efficiently. The age limit of 16-30 years is the primary criterion for identifying who is considered youth. Youth development aims to create youth who are noble, healthy, resilient, intelligent, independent, and professional, and who have a role and responsibility in development (Suyatna et al., 2023). This mechanism makes it easier for the public to convey their aspirations to the government, which in turn will create policies that are more targeted and relevant to local needs, increasing transparency and accountability in development budget management, which has long been a crucial issue in governance. Surabaya, with its status as one of the largest cities in Indonesia, faces significant challenges in designing development policies that can embrace all community groups, from economic, social, and cultural perspectives (Rijal et al., 2023). Therefore, it is important to examine how the CAS Program can accommodate this diversity in city development planning, and the extent to which the resulting policies can benefit all levels of society.

This study will also explore the extent to which the CAS Program has been successful in improving the quality of life for the people of Surabaya. Quality of life, in this context, is measured not only from physical or economic perspectives but also from social and psychological perspectives (Nurjannah & Hamid, 2023). Community empowerment through this program is expected to create a more independent community, more involved in the decision-making process, and have the capacity to manage and utilize development resources more effectively. This will also have a positive impact on overall city development. This study aims to contribute to the formulation of more inclusive and pro-people policies. It is hoped that through effective empowerment, the people of Surabaya can become empowered subjects in building their own city, which will ultimately contribute to the creation of more sustainable development and better able to meet the needs of all parties.

2. Method

Qualitative research is used to explore, identify, characterize, and explain the qualities or attributes of social impacts that cannot be measured or articulated by quantitative methodologies. Data collection techniques are an essential part of any research to obtain relevant and accurate information. In this study, data were collected through interviews with young people aged 18-30 years old, and community leaders who live or are active in Surabaya, selected purposively to obtain relevant and in-depth information. The research location was in the Dr. Soetomo Village, Surabaya. Data collection was conducted through a survey using a questionnaire containing open-ended and closed-ended questions to explore the views and experiences of the informants. In addition to the survey, in-depth interviews were also conducted with several selected respondents to enrich the data and understand the context more deeply. The survey was conducted directly to reach a wider range of participants.

The data collection technique used literature studies and surveys. This study uses the community empowerment theory from Zimmerman and Chambers, namely: 1) Cognitive, 2) Psychological, 3) Organizational or Collective, 4) Socio-Economic, 5) Participatory. This analysis helps understand the patterns and meanings that emerge from the informants related to the research topic. With this method, the study aims to obtain a comprehensive picture of the perceptions and experiences of Surabaya's youth. The analytical approach used is interactive analysis, which consists of three main components: data condensation, data display, and formulation of conclusions. This strategy is expected to produce valuable information for policymakers and become a model for similar projects in other regions.

3. Result and Discussion

Cognitive

This cognitive indicator refers to the level of community knowledge and awareness of social conditions, their rights, and opportunities to improve their lives (Reskiaddin et al., 2020). A cognitively empowered community has adequate information, understands the issues they face, and knows how to access resources or assistance. The CAS program has successfully increased youth understanding of the concept of participatory development. Through discussion forums held during the Youth Musrenbang, participants not only expressed their aspirations but also learned about the development planning process (Marina & Hardjono, 2023). This process demonstrates that knowledge is not solely provided by the government but is instead built through interactive dialogue that actively involves youth.



Figure 1. Activities of the Young Assistant to the Mayor of Surabaya.

The infrastructure inauguration activities involving the Young Assistant Mayor of Surabaya contributed directly to the cognitive empowerment of the community. Through the active involvement of the young assistants in government, young people gained a real understanding of the city's development process. Their presence also served as a means of public education, bridging information between the government and the community in a more intimate way. This activity fostered awareness that development is inclusive and accessible to the younger generation. By witnessing the active participation of young people, the community, especially young people, was encouraged to better understand their rights, roles, and responsibilities in city development. This aligns with the goal of cognitive empowerment: to create citizens who are aware, understanding, and willing to actively participate.

During the CAS implementation in Dr. Soetomo Village, participants were provided with information on development planning mechanisms, including the roles of Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPD) and village officials. This education was delivered using the cangkrukan method, which is sociologically more easily accepted by young people because it is not rigid and adopts local culture. This understanding opens a critical awareness that they are not only objects of development, but also subjects who can participate in determining policy direction. The implementation of the Youth Musrenbang through Cangkrukan Arek Suroboyo (CAS) encourages increased youth understanding of regional development mechanisms. A total of 200 participants attended the Youth Musrenbang in Dr. Soetomo Village, demonstrating high enthusiasm and direct involvement in planning discussions.

In this forum, youth submitted proposals individually using sticky notes and in groups based on neighborhood units (RW), resulting in 12 priority aspirations. This activity provided practical experience in identifying problems, formulating solutions, and understanding the flow of aspirations to policy. Furthermore, the Communication and Informatics Agency's Broadband Learning Centers (BLCs) are spread across 53 locations, such as the BLCs in Grudo Flats, Tanah Merah, and the BLCs in Gayungan and Putat Jaya Sub-districts. They provided IT and digital literacy training to strengthen the cognitive capacity of Surabaya's youth. They conveyed aspirations regarding public facilities, scholarships, job training, and environmental security. This is an indication that the CAS program is able to facilitate cognitive development in the context of community empowerment.

Psychological

This indicator measures levels of self-confidence, self-esteem, and feelings of control over one's life. Psychologically empowered individuals do not feel afraid or inferior when faced with authority or challenges (Sihab & Nurchayati, 2019). They believe they are capable of making changes and making important decisions. Psychologically, CAS involvement has positive effects, including increased self-confidence and personal motivation. Many participants, particularly young people, stated that the CAS forum was the first place where they truly felt heard by the government. This recognition serves as an important morale booster for young people to continue actively contributing to their communities.

CAS activities also strengthen a sense of ownership in their region and city. Young people no longer view development solely as a government matter, but rather as a shared responsibility. When their aspirations are addressed and realized, a sense of pride emerges that encourages continued involvement, such as joining the Great Surabaya Cadre or becoming neighborhood security volunteers. This involvement fosters a collective spirit and strengthens social cohesion among young people. Through discussions, entertainment, and collaboration at the events, participants form stronger and more supportive social relationships. These social relationships play a crucial role in fostering a sense of security, acceptance, and emotional support within the community.

Psychologically, CAS has a significant impact on increasing self-confidence, speaking courage, and social motivation of young people. Young people feel their aspirations are valued because the forum is packaged in a typical youthful manner (relaxed, open, and accompanied by musical entertainment), creating a comfortable and inclusive atmosphere. Based on BPS data (Surabaya in Figures 2024), the number of young people aged 15–29 in Surabaya reached 699,039, which shows the enormous potential of this group as a subject of development. With real participation such as recruitment as Great Surabaya Cadres (KSH) and youth mosque caretakers, young people not only voice their aspirations but also receive formal roles and monthly incentives from the City Government, thereby strengthening their identity and motivation as part of the solution.

Young people participating in training programs, such as those at the Broadband Learning Center (BLC), also experience psychological transformation through the development of new skills. Mastery of information technology, design, and the internet makes them feel better prepared to face the challenges of the workplace and able to compete professionally. This serves as a crucial stimulus in the empowerment process. In the long term, this type of psychological intervention will strengthen the resilience and fighting spirit of Surabaya's youth. With emotional and mental empowerment, young people will be more resilient to social and economic pressures and able to maintain an active role in the development of their communities.

Organization or Collective

Organizational or collective development demonstrates the community's ability to unite, form groups, and collaborate to achieve common goals. Empowerment in this indicator is evident in the existence and strength of community organizations such as farmer groups, cooperatives, youth groups, or local NGOs (Moridu et al., 2023). When communities are able to organize themselves, they can more effectively advocate for their rights and interests through collective strength. The organizational/collective aspect is very evident in the implementation of CAS (Wastiti et al., 2020). The Youth Musrebang brings together various youth from different neighborhood units (RW), creating a meeting space to build understanding and solidarity between groups. The result is the formation of informal networks that strengthen the collective capacity of young residents.

One concrete result of this strengthening is the emergence of collaboration between youth organizations such as PSHT, GP Anshor, and IPM Muhammadiyah in securing city events. This collaboration demonstrates that CAS produces not only discourse, but also concrete actions based on collective work and cross-group mutual cooperation. At the institutional level, Surabaya Next Leader serves as a forum for continued development that strengthens the structure of youth organizations. The existence of structured development from the central level down to the neighborhood unit (RT) demonstrates that this program is integrated and capable of creating a clear and sustainable cadre development system.

The presence of mentors or facilitators in CAS plays a crucial role in assisting youth groups in forming empowered communities. They are guided to design and manage activities based on local interests and potential. This initiative not only strengthens the organizational structure but also enhances youth managerial capabilities. The program also encourages the emergence of creative communities such as creative hubs and village-based youth forums. Utilizing city government assets as community spaces ensures that youth organizations no longer operate sporadically but are instead organized and equipped with adequate supporting infrastructure.

Socio-Economic

Socioeconomic empowerment is reflected in a community's ability to access and manage economic resources, such as employment, business capital, education, and health (Setiawan, 2017)(Pristiwanti et al., 2022). Socioeconomically empowered communities

possess skills that can increase income, are able to manage their own businesses, and are not dependent on continuous assistance. Youth Musrenbang activities have a direct impact on youth economic empowerment. BPS data from 2023 recorded 1,463,594 people in the active workforce in Surabaya, and 106,120 people were unemployed. CAS has a significant impact on the socio-economic aspects of youth, particularly through various forms of facilitation provided by the Surabaya City Government. Programs such as scholarships *Resilient Youth* Providing opportunities for students from low-income families to continue their education is a strategic, long-term form of social investment.

Furthermore, the government also provides training based on youth needs. The training areas are diverse, ranging from multimedia and household waste management to urban agriculture. This training is conducted in collaboration with relevant government agencies, ensuring locally relevant interventions and responsive to current job demands. Government support is also evident in youth business development. Facilitating business permits and participating in exhibitions such as Car Free Day and city events provides a tangible platform for youth to market their products. This not only increases income but also fosters entrepreneurial spirit and economic independence.

Utilizing city assets as creative hubs is also a strategic step to encourage the creative economy among youth. These spaces serve as a meeting place for ideas, collaboration, and business experimentation, strengthening the socio-economic foundations of communities. Another socio-economic impact is the emergence of new job opportunities, such as mosque caretakers and Great Surabaya Cadres. These positions not only provide a steady income but also strengthen a sense of social responsibility and foster youth's active role in developing their surrounding environment.

Participatory

Participation certainly assesses the extent to which communities are actively involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs or policies that affect their lives (Wastiti et al., 2020). Participatory communities have a voice in deliberations, are involved in decision-making, and participate in monitoring programs to ensure they are on target. CAS has become an authentic participatory space for Surabaya's youth. In this forum, young people are given equal space to voice their ideas, both individually and collectively. They write their

aspirations on sticky notes or in neighborhood association (RW) discussions, and the results are then used as consideration by city government agencies (OPD).



Figure 1. Surabaya Youth Activities in Surabaya Next Leader.

The number of aspirations collected from the Dr. Soetomo Village Youth Musrenbang reached 12 priority points and dozens of individual aspirations covering issues of education, training, security, and social welfare. This demonstrates that the participatory process is not merely symbolic, but truly accommodates the needs of the young community. This participation is also supported by the existence of the SNL (Surabaya Next Leader) platform, which allows youth to stay connected with the government in the long term. Youth members of SNL have the opportunity to provide direct input to the Mayor of Surabaya and oversee development programs on the ground..

Their involvement extends beyond discussion spaces to program execution. Youth are involved in security for city events, social activities, and even serve as facilitators in training. This means that participation in the program is comprehensive, from planning to implementation. Finally, CAS demonstrates that structured and inclusive participation can accelerate the empowerment process. When youth are fully involved and given a meaningful role, a generation is created that is not only critical and caring, but also ready to lead and maintain the sustainability of city development.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the Cangkrukan Arek Suroboyo (CAS) Program has made a significant contribution to the community empowerment process, particularly among

Surabaya's youth. Through a participatory and community-based approach, the program has successfully fostered collective awareness of the importance of citizens' active participation in city development. CAS serves not only as a forum for gathering aspirations but also as an educational tool that broadens youth understanding of public policy and the development planning process. The Cangkrukan Arek Suroboyo (CAS) Program has proven effective in empowering communities, particularly youth in Surabaya. The program has successfully increased youth understanding, self-confidence, and active involvement in development planning and implementation. Through CAS, youth not only voice their aspirations but are also directly involved in various social and economic roles, such as regional cadres, training participants, and MSMEs. Thus, CAS can be an adaptive and relevant model of community empowerment for participatory city development.

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