



Collaborative Governance in the Preservation of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa in Semarang

Nawangsa Wincahyo Artiko Aji¹, Asih Widi Lestari², Renata Jati Nirmala³

^{1,2,3}Public Administration Program, Universitas Diponegoro, Semarang, Indonesia.

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CORRESPONDENCE

E-mail: awangwincahyo@live.undip.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the dynamics of collaborative governance in traditional art preservation efforts, highlighting the case of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa (WONP) in Semarang City. The approach used is descriptive qualitative with guidance from Emerson et al.'s (2012) Collaborative Action Framework. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, document analysis, and literature review. Data validity was ensured through triangulation and member checking techniques. The results showed the involvement of various stakeholders, such as local government, art communities, universities, and civil society. They collaborated in various activities, such as organizing cultural festivals, joint performances, and training programs. This collaboration increases public participation, supports the regeneration of artists, and strengthens cultural sustainability. However, there are still obstacles in the form of limited institutional capacity, unstructured funding mechanisms, and power imbalances between parties. Although this study focuses on the context of Semarang, the results have comparative relevance for other regions that wish to apply a collaborative approach to cultural heritage management. Practically, this study provides recommendations for strengthening multi-stakeholder coordination in preserving intangible cultural heritage. Socially, this study emphasizes the importance of inclusive strategies in strengthening local cultural identity. The originality of this study lies in its empirical contribution to understanding how a collaborative framework can be effectively applied to preserve traditional arts amid modern challenges.

INTRODUCTION

The preservation of traditional arts is crucial in maintaining cultural identity, social integrity, and the sustainability of noble values that shape the nation's personality. In the context of Indonesia as a country with high cultural diversity, traditional arts not only serve as aesthetic expressions but also as instruments of character education, transmission of moral values, and sources of creative economic potential based on locality. Therefore, the development of cultural arts is not merely a symbolic task, but a constitutional mandate. Law

Number 5 of 2017 concerning the Promotion of Culture states that the protection, development, utilization, and cultivation of cultural es is a shared responsibility between the central and regional governments. However, in practice, the protection and development of traditional arts often face multidimensional challenges, especially at the local level.

One concrete example is the Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa group in Semarang City (WONP), which was established on July 1, 1937. This group has become an important symbol of the existence of the traditional art of wayang orang. WONP regularly holds performances at the Ki Narto Sabdho Building in the Raden Saleh Cultural Park in Semarang City. However, with changes in the social landscape and technological developments, its existence has come under serious pressure that threatens its continuity. These challenges include funding uncertainty, a crisis in artist regeneration, limited facilities, and declining public interest in traditional performing arts.

The most crucial problem can be seen from the funding side. Since 2015, WONP has no longer received social assistance from the Central Java Provincial Budget. As a result, the management of performances is highly dependent on income from ticket sales. However, performance tickets are sold at relatively low prices and there are few spectators (Sujarno et al., 2016) . The imbalance between income and production needs also impacts the low frequency of performances and the limited ability to recruit and nurture young artists. In the long term, this condition has the potential to cause the disintegration of cultural heritage that has been preserved so far (Widiantoro et al., 2018) . This issue reflects the weakness of the single actor-based (state-centric) approach, which has placed the local government as the sole center of control for cultural governance. However, in the context of decentralization and the complexity of local cultural governance, a more participatory, responsive, and collaborative model is needed. This is reinforced by the findings of (2018) , which show that the sustainability of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa requires patronage from various parties who are expected to provide support in various aspects.

Based on these various issues, a conceptual framework is needed to explain how synergies between parties can be effectively built in the management of traditional arts. The Collaborative Governance approach offers a relevant perspective for understanding the dynamics of cross-actor cooperation in cultural governance, especially amid the complexity of diverse roles and interests. Ansell & Gash (2008) define Collaborative Governance as a form of government in which one or more public institutions directly involve non-state stakeholders in a formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative joint decision-making process, with the aim of formulating or implementing public policy, or managing public programs and assets. This model emphasizes the importance of deliberative spaces, equal power sharing, and the creation of mutual trust between the parties involved. Furthermore, Emerson et al. (2012) argue that multi-actor involvement is important to achieve public goals that cannot be achieved independently.

Collaborative governance in the context of cultural preservation studies offers opportunities to bridge the interests of various parties, such as the government, arts communities, academics, the private sector, digital media, and the general public, to jointly create adaptive mechanisms based on the local context. In the context of Wayang Orang Ngesti

Pandawa, this approach is strategic for overcoming structures and institutions that limit effectiveness. Previous studies have tended to focus on aspects of documentation, revitalization of performance forms, or arts training, but few have examined in depth how the structure and dynamics of cross-actor collaboration are formed within the local cultural governance ecosystem. In fact, the protection and development of traditional arts such as wayang orang require not only protection in terms of their symbolic values, but also in terms of institutions, resources, and long-term adaptation strategies to changing times.

Thus, this study aims to address academic and practical needs in formulating a model of collaboration in the preservation and development of traditional culture. This study specifically aims to: (1) identify strategic actors involved in the preservation of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa; (2) map the forms of collaboration that occur between these actors; (3) analyze the challenges faced in building collaboration; and (4) formulate strategies to strengthen collaborative governance in the preservation of traditional arts at the local level. The results of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of a collaborative governance approach in the context of culture, as well as provide practical policy implications for strengthening synergies among stakeholders in the preservation and development of intangible cultural heritage in Indonesia.

METHOD

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative, with a research focus directed at describing and analyzing the collaboration process between actors in an effort to maintain the sustainability of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa, which is analyzed using a framework that refers to the Collaborative Action model from Emerson et al.(2012) . This framework emphasizes the concrete form of cross-sector or inter-institutional cooperation, in which different actors (government, private sector, civil society) jointly implement public policies, programs, or activities, based on the principles of sharing responsibilities, resources, and results. The stakeholders involved included the Semarang City Culture and Tourism Office, artists and administrators of Ngesti Pandawa, local arts and culture communities, academics, as well as the media and the general public.

Data was obtained through triangulation techniques by combining in-depth interviews, direct observation, document analysis, and literature studies. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with several key informants from various sectors contributing to preservation activities. Observations were conducted between July and August 2025 by attending live performances and other supporting activities, while the documents reviewed included relevant articles and journals, policy archives, media reports, and regulations related to cultural preservation. To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, cross-verification between sources and confirmation with key informants (*member checking*) were carried out. With this approach, this study seeks to evaluate the quality of collaboration between stakeholders and identify the determining factors for success in the sustainable management of traditional arts at the local level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Collaborative Action Framework in Emerson et al.'s "" ((2012)) emphasizes the importance of *joint action* as a result of dynamic interactions between principled engagement, shared motivation, and capacity for joint action. In the context of preserving Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa (WONP), collaborative action is reflected through the implementation of preservation activities and programs that involve various cross-sector actors in a participatory and shared responsibility-based process.

Collaborative Action in the Preservation and Development of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa in Semarang

The collaborative process began with a shared awareness among the actors of the importance of preserving Wayang Orang as an intangible cultural heritage. The planning of activities such as a regular performance schedule, cultural festivals, art training workshops, and the strengthening of marketing for performances through social media was carried out through deliberations between the WONP management, the Semarang City Culture and Tourism Office, the arts community, and academics. One of the key actors in the governance of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa (WONP) is the Semarang City Government, which plays a strategic role through various forms of institutional facilitation, infrastructure, and educational programs. The main support can be seen in the provision of the Ki Narto Sabdho Building in the Raden Saleh Cultural Park as a permanent performance venue that is provided free of rent and electricity bills, as well as the free loan of a set of regional gamelan instruments (Sulistiani, 2022).

In addition to providing facilities, the Culture and Tourism Office also runs cultural education programs by inviting students from kindergarten to high school to watch WONP performances. This effort aims to build cultural awareness from an early age while strengthening the audience base for traditional arts (Humas Jateng, 2019) . The government also plans to renovate the TBRS building to make it more suitable and attractive as a center for cultural activities. The government's active role is also evident in its support for public activities, such as the commemoration of the 88th anniversary of WONP in July 2025, which will be open to the public free of charge. Additionally, the city government facilitates cross-sector cultural dialogue forums that discuss preservation strategies, including artist training, management strengthening, and promotion of local cultural identity. Through infrastructure support, education, promotion, and facilitation of cross-actor collaboration, the Semarang City Government plays a crucial role in creating sustainable and participatory governance for the preservation of traditional arts.

Several universities in Semarang have become important pillars in the preservation of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa through tangible intellectual and practical contributions. Research by notes four major forms of contribution, including art appreciation, management development, player support, and the use of technology as a holistic preservation strategy. In 2017, Diponegoro University (Undip) held a wayang orang performance entitled "Wayang Spektra 60 Guru Besar Undip" to commemorate Undip's 60th anniversary with the play "Semar Mbangun Kahyangan." The performance successfully earned a MURI record for the

largest number of professors appearing as wayang orang performers, while also strengthening the existence of Ngesti Pandawa as a traditional arts group with high academic support.



Source: FISIP Undip (2017)

This activity signifies the role of academics in cultural preservation, not only in theory but also in practice, strengthening the collaborative network between higher education institutions, traditional arts communities, and the general public. By involving high-level academic elements, this participation expands the scope of cross-sector collaboration and strengthens an inclusive and symbolic cultural governance structure. Thus, the involvement of universities and academics in the preservation of WONP is not merely rhetorical—it is manifested in the form of practical collaboration between the academic world, the arts community, and the younger generation. This contribution strengthens the model of collaborative management based on research and cultural regeneration, which is highly relevant in facing the challenges of modernization and cultural disruption.

The involvement of the general public also plays an important role in supporting the sustainability of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa. Although the market segmentation for this performance is relatively limited, interviews and observations show that there is a steady audience base. This is demonstrated by the consistent attendance of a number of groups who regularly watch Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa performances, reflecting the loyalty of the audience who play a role in preserving the existence of this traditional performing art. In fact, on several occasions, public enthusiasm has been quite high. This can be seen at the 88th Anniversary of Ngesti Pandawa, which was held at the new Raden Salah Cultural Park Building in Semarang.

The high level of support for the preservation of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa is also reflected in the active involvement of various art studios in Semarang City, one of which is the Mardayu Art Studio. Based on interviews, this studio consistently participates in performances by organizing extra shows such as karawitan and panembrama performances as a form of non-commercial contribution. This involvement is carried out without asking for financial compensation, which shows a cultural commitment and solidarity among artists in maintaining the sustainability of traditional performing arts at the local level.



Source: Researcher's Observations (2025)

Although not all support is directly financial, this form of contribution reflects shared responsibility, which is a hallmark of collaborative action. Effective collaborative action is characterized by a proportional and complementary division of roles. In the case of WONP, the following division of tasks was found:

From the findings of the research conducted, the Ngesti Pandawa Wayang Orang Group has shown that the preservation of traditional arts is not a responsibility that can be borne by a single actor. This is in line with what is stated in the collaborative governance framework (by that collaborative governance generally begins with a practical goal, namely to encourage actions or achievements that cannot be done by one organization alone. Awareness of the importance of this synergy reflects the existence of a shared theory of action, namely a common understanding that the sustainability of the Ngesti Pandawa wayang orang performance art requires collective work across sectors (Emerson et al., 2012) . Without such coordination and shared commitment, preservation efforts will tend to be sporadic and at risk of losing their support. Therefore, a strategy to strengthen collaborative governance is crucial in ensuring that Ngesti Pandawa Wayang Orang can continue to thrive and remain relevant amid the ever-changing socio-cultural dynamics.

Challenges in Collaborative Action in the Preservation and Development of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa in Semarang City

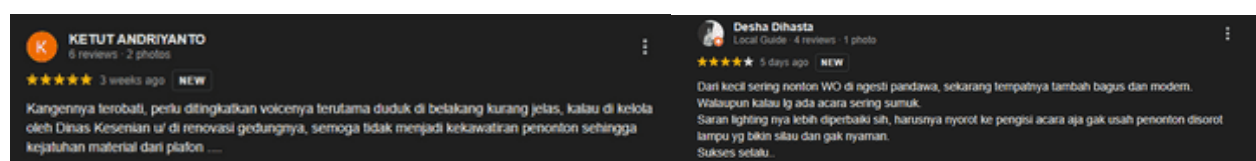
In implementing collaborative governance for the preservation of the traditional art of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa in Semarang City, there are a number of fundamental challenges that hinder the effectiveness and sustainability of cross-actor collaboration. One of the main issues that stands out is the absence of a joint funding mechanism that is designed to be systemic and sustainable. To date, the financing scheme used is ad-hoc and reactive, heavily dependent on income from affordable ticket sales, irregular personal donations, and informal support from several external parties such as the arts community or academics. This dependence causes instability in program planning, weak capacity to carry out long-term activities, and limited room for innovation in performance development.

Emerson et al. (2012), emphasize that *collaborative capacity* not only encompasses the ability of actors to work together, but is also closely related to the availability of sufficient financial, institutional, and technical resources to enable effective joint action. Furthermore, Donahue & Zeckhauser (2011) reinforce that without the joint and structured contribution of resources,

cross-sector collaboration tends to be uneven and unsustainable in the long term. On the other hand, legitimacy and fairness are important in the distribution of the burden of collaboration, meaning that if only one party continues to be the main supporter, then the collaborative relationship, which should be equal and participatory, will turn into a subordinate relationship (Huxham & Vangen, 2013) .

In addition, the absence of a joint funding mechanism also indicates the weakness of the institutionalization process of the established cooperation. In fact, institutionalization of collaborative structures and procedures is needed so that collaboration can produce long-term impacts, including the establishment of a joint budget framework that can be agreed upon and implemented by all stakeholders involved (Bryson et al., 2006) . Without this, the sustainability of activities will only rely on the initiatives of certain individuals or groups, which are prone to disruption due to leadership changes, political dynamics, or changes in policy priorities. Therefore, in the context of preserving traditional arts such as Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa, it is important to design a collaborative funding system that involves not only the government, but also the private sector, universities, and civil society in a framework of shared responsibility. This is in line with the principle of value co-creation in public governance, which emphasizes that the best public values can be produced through cross-sector collective involvement (Osborne, 2010) . Without an inclusive and long-term funding framework, preservation efforts will only be symbolic and will not address the structural problems faced by traditional art groups.

On the other hand, the institutional capacity of the Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa art group still faces various structural and technical limitations, particularly in terms of modern organizational management and the use of digital technology. To date, for example, there is no online ticketing mechanism (e-ticketing), which hinders the expansion of the audience, especially among the younger generation who are accustomed to digital access. In addition, regular performances are not yet equipped with LED screens on stage as visual aids, even though the use of such visual technology has been proven to increase the appeal of art performances in the modern era.



Source: Google Review (2025)

Other technical problems are also frequently encountered, such as sound systems that are often faulty and interfere with the quality of performances, as well as air conditioning systems in performance venues that sometimes do not function optimally, thereby reducing the comfort of audiences and performers. This condition indicates the weakness of the supporting infrastructure that should be part of technical capacity within the framework of capacity for joint action (Emerson et al., 2012) . When arts groups do not have adequate technological and managerial support, the potential for collaboration with external parties, whether government, private, or community, becomes difficult to optimize in a sustainable manner. In

fact, the success of collaborative governance is largely determined by the availability of institutional capacity, which includes technical, administrative, and adaptive leadership resources. The absence of such capacity has made it difficult for Ngesti Pandawa to develop adaptive strategies amid technological disruption and changing public preferences for digital entertainment. Ansell & Gash (2008) also emphasize that effective collaborative governance requires institutions that are capable of innovating and responding to cross-sector challenges quickly and appropriately. Therefore, increasing institutional capacity, both in terms of management and technological infrastructure, must be a priority in the agenda of preserving traditional arts based on collaboration.

Furthermore, cross-actor collaboration in the preservation of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa has not been fully supported by a data-based collaborative evaluation system. Until now, evaluations of collaborative activities have tended to be informal, incidental, and not systematically documented. There are no standard evaluation instruments, mutually agreed indicators of success, or participatory reporting mechanisms involving all stakeholders. Until now, the success of regular performances has been measured qualitatively and subjectively, for example, based on the number of audience members or general impressions of the performance. There has been no integrated reporting that includes, for example, ticket sales trends, audience demographics, audience satisfaction ratings, or the impact of the program on the regeneration of artists. In fact, these indicators are very important for developing long-term strategies based on real needs (needs-based planning) and for attracting support from sponsors and other stakeholders. Therefore, it is necessary to reformulate a collaborative evaluation system that is inclusive, measurable, and data-driven in order to improve the effectiveness and legitimacy of sustainable arts and culture preservation governance. In fact, in a performance-based collaborative governance approach, the existence of an evidence-based monitoring system is key to ensuring accountability, improving program effectiveness, and supporting a sustainable collective learning process (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Evaluations based on concrete data enable collaborators to objectively assess success, identify obstacles, and adjust strategies based on the dynamics occurring in the field.

The absence of success metrics also makes it difficult to build public accountability, as there are no benchmarks that can be used to assess the contributions of each actor. This is in line with the findings Koontz & Thomas (2006) which show that failure to design a participatory evaluation system risks blurring the boundaries of responsibility between parties and weakening the legitimacy of collaboration in the eyes of the public. Furthermore, without a structured feedback loop, the collaboration process becomes prone to stagnation and unable to adapt responsively to changes in needs or external environmental conditions.

To overcome these challenges, three main aspects of the collaborative governance framework need to be strengthened: (1) the establishment of a joint funding scheme that involves government and non-government actors in a fair and transparent manner, as suggested by Donahue & Zeckhauser (2011); (2) institutional capacity building through training and technical support in organizational management and digitization; and (3) development of an indicator-based evaluation system that is collaboratively developed and in line with the shared theory of action of collaborative governance (Emerson et al., 2012).

Thus, although cross-actor collaboration efforts have been implemented in the preservation of Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa, a number of crucial aspects still need improvement in order for the collaboration to run optimally. A collaborative governance approach in the preservation of traditional arts requires solid structural support, institutional capacity building, and a data-driven and participatory evaluation system. These three elements must be integrated to create an adaptive, accountable, and sustainable collaborative ecosystem. Without a strong institutional foundation and systematic reflective mechanisms, collaboration will tend to be ceremonial and unable to respond to the social, technological, and cultural challenges faced by traditional arts in the modern era. Therefore, collaborative transformation must be directed not only at synergy between actors, but also at renewing working methods, funding, and evaluation so that the preservation of traditional arts remains relevant and impactful in the long term.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that collaborative governance plays an important role in maintaining the sustainability of traditional performing arts such as Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandawa in Semarang City. The active involvement of various stakeholders demonstrates a collective awareness of shared responsibility in protecting intangible cultural heritage. This collaborative practice not only strengthens social capacity but also opens up more inclusive public participation in the process of protecting and developing traditional arts. However, the results of the study reveal a number of obstacles that still hinder the effectiveness and sustainability of this collaboration. The main challenges include the absence of joint funding mechanisms, weak institutional capacity in technology management and utilization, and the lack of a data-based evaluation system. These obstacles result in limited coordination, low program sustainability, and suboptimal public accountability in the management of traditional arts.

In practical terms, this research contributes to the strengthening of collaboration-oriented cultural policies, particularly in encouraging cross-sector partnerships and community-based innovation. Further research is recommended to explore collaborative cultural governance models in other regions, examine the potential of digital technology in community engagement, and assess the long-term impact of multi-actor collaboration on local cultural resilience. The main limitations of this study lie in its single case focus and qualitative approach, which limit the generalization of results. Nevertheless, these findings provide an important foundation for the development of discourse and collaborative governance practices in the protection of traditional arts in the modern era.

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