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Deliberative Democracy through Public Dialogue: A Case Study of Road Development in Kampung Bandungsari RW 04, Tambangan Village, Mijen District, Semarang City

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Abstract: Public dialogue serves as a two-way communication channel through public spaces to identify community needs. This research is motivated by efforts to address road issues in Kampung Bandungsari through public dialogue. The active participation of Kampung Bandungsari residents aligns with Jurgen Habermas's principles of deliberative democracy, as it leads to agreements that accommodate public interests. The research methodology employed is qualitative. Data collection was conducted through interviews and observations. Purposive sampling was used to select informants for this study. The research findings demonstrate that the active participation of Kampung Bandungsari residents in this process resulted in agreements that accommodate public interests. Field observations reveal that public dialogue in road construction in Kampung Bandungsari adheres to the principles of deliberative democracy.

Keywords: Deliberative Democracy, Public Dialogue, Development.

INTRODUCTION

According to (Shaina, 2023), development is linked to disparities. Shaina (2023) further states that infrastructure development in Indonesia faces challenges such as limited accessibility, insufficient government investment, unstable regional security, centralized decision-making, and limited resources.

Village development is discussed in (Silalahi, 2024:3), citing Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages. Article 1, paragraph 8, states that village development aims to improve the welfare of the village community. Infrastructure development in Indonesia plays a vital and strategic role in national progress. By Law No. 23 of 2014 on village governance, the objective is to enhance the effectiveness of village governance, ensuring community welfare, improving the quality of public services, fostering national and regional competitiveness, and preserving local customs, traditions, and culture.

One solution to address these infrastructure development challenges in Indonesia is community engagement. According to (Abidin, 2023:47), infrastructure development requires community involvement. Community participation, as defined by Ndraha (1990:102) (cited in Abidin, 2023:40), is a form of collective participation in a shared activity.

Community participation is crucial because, according to (Sigalingging, 2014), they are the ones who best understand local issues and needs. Public spaces serve as platforms for community discussions. This aligns with Habermas's view (cited in Hardiman:128-129) that government control is indirectly exercised through public opinion.

Community participation, as stated by (Dedeng, 2023:227), is essential in development activities to achieve good governance. This finding is supported by (Isvara, 2025:23), who argues that community ideas can create inclusive public spaces for discussion, opinion formation, and the rational and communicative expression of aspirations.

Kampung Bandungsari, according to (Annaz, 2022:105), has undergone significant changes due to development. The residents of Kampung Bandungsari have been vocal in criticizing issues to their local RT, RW, and village government. This trend of residents boldly expressing their opinions has had a positive impact on the village, particularly concerning road construction. As a result of constant criticism from the villagers, the road conditions improved within two months (see Figure 1).



Figure 1 Comparison of road Conditions in Kampung Bandungsari in March and July 2022
Source: Annaz (2022)

Community involvement is a crucial component of village development. This aligns with the perspective of (Irawan, 2020:137) who argues that community-based development is ideal because it is aligned with local needs and aspirations. In the context of modern society, according to Habermas (cited in Amir, 2024:30), the concept of public space is essential for ensuring citizen participation in democratic processes.

The dialogue space on dprdsemarang.id is vital for listening to public aspirations, ultimately leading to more inclusive and responsive policies that address community needs. Active community participation in overseeing Semarang City's policies has significantly contributed to building a better city (DPRD Kota Semarang, 2025).

Deliberative democracy, as defined by (Mutaqqien, 2023:55), is a mechanism for public dialogue that takes place between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, among citizens, and between citizens and leaders. This dialogue occurs through formal and informal communication, providing access for the public to participate beyond the realm of state administration.

Public dialogue, according to (Tyasotyaningrum, 2019:6-12), is a form of implementing open government. Tyasotyaningrum further argues that public dialogue plays a crucial role in enhancing public trust, building community legitimacy, and improving decision-making. In public dialogue, the government can create space for citizens to express their aspirations, criticisms, and suggestions, fostering transparent and accountable two-way communication.

The construction of Kampung Bandungsari's road involved public dialogue with the Deputy of the Semarang City DPRD, aligning with Habermas's principles of deliberative

democracy. The residents' concerns about the frequent potholes were addressed with durable concrete materials, reflecting Habermas's ideal deliberative process. Through the exchange of arguments and active participation of Kampung Bandungsari residents, this process resulted in an agreement that accommodated public interests. This wasn't just about solving traffic congestion but a manifestation of the deliberative process that generated legitimacy and mutual understanding about an ideal public space for reaching rational consensus (see Figure 2).



Figure 2 Kampung Bandungsari Road in March 2025
Source: Researcher documentation (2025)

Previous research on deliberative democracy has been conducted by several scholars. Firstly, according to (Nurdin, 2021:4), deliberative democracy emphasizes intensive discussions between the government and stakeholders. Nurdin (2021:5) adds that the logic of deliberative democracy is based on the principle of communicative action, ultimately leading to superior public policy.

Secondly, in line with Nurdin's (2021) research, (Hendrawan, 2022:16) defines deliberative democracy as a process of public decision-making through deliberation between the government and the public to address shared concerns in public spaces. (Hendrawan, 2022:23) concludes that the practice of open government in Semarang City from 2018 to 2019 supports deliberative democracy, enabling public space deliberation and successfully revitalizing it to be more participatory and collaborative.

Thirdly, in contrast to previous research, Santoso (2023) argues that the transplantation of the deliberative democracy system in Indonesia aligns with the fourth principle of Pancasila, which emphasizes deliberation. A healthy system of deliberation within the concept of deliberative democracy requires discussion and appropriate consideration from public spaces. The clash of government will and public will creates dynamics because it fails to achieve vox populi and vox dei, leading to conflicts of interest (Santoso, 2023: 190-191).

Based on these three relevant studies, it can be explained that this research differs in its focus on deliberative democracy in the context of road construction in a village and concentrates on participation in the public dialogue process. This offers a specific and context-bound perspective compared to previous studies that were more theoretical and general. The objective of this research is to analyze deliberative democracy in public dialogue regarding road construction in Kampung Bandungsari, Tambangan Village, Mijen District, Semarang City.

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. According to (Nasution, 2023), qualitative descriptive methods involve in-depth exploration. This research delves into public dialogue in Kampung Bandungsari RW 04, Tambangan

Village, Mijen District, Semarang City. Key informants in this research include individuals relevant to public dialogue in Kampung Bandungsari, comprising the RW 04 Head, community leaders, and residents as representatives of community groups selected using purposive sampling.The informants involved in this research are:

1. RW 04 Head
2. Community Leader
3. Community Members

This research employs a triangulation method, a qualitative technique that combines three stages to produce valid and reliable data. The techniques used include: 1) in-depth interviews, 2) participatory observation, and 3) document analysis related to community governance and activities.

The analysis is inductive, meaning that the data obtained is developed into specific patterns of relationships, as described by Sugiyono (2018: 335). Data analysis in this research utilizes a qualitative approach using the Miles and Huberman model. According to Sugiyono (2018: 337), data is analyzed in three stages: (1) data reduction, (2) data display, and (3) data verification. In the research to be conducted, this will be achieved through:

1. The researcher will directly observe public dialogue in meetings related to infrastructure development in Kampung Bandungsari.
2. The researcher will compare interview results and explore perspectives on the deliberative process, participation, and outcomes.
3. The researcher will identify dominant themes, arguments, and power dynamics within the public dialogue to reveal the extent to which the process is deliberative.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Deliberative demcrtic Process in Road Development in Kampung Bandungsari

Goals

Public dialogue in Kampung Bandungsari was initiated to listen to community aspirations regarding issues and needs, facilitated within a public space. According to Habermas (cited in Hardiman, 2009:134), public spaces allow citizens to freely express their views because they create a conducive environment for argumentation.

As stated by Mr. Slamet Sutopo, a community leader: "The initial information came from the Deputy of the Semarang City DPRD, who was planning an activity designed to gather community aspirations. The information was conveyed to the RW Head, who then provided a space for the community to gather and invited representatives from Kampung Bandungsari." (Interview with Mr. Slamet Sutopo, 56 years old, on March 17, 2025).

This statement is convirmed by the RW 04 Head, Mr. Pranoto, who explained:

"The RESES II activity was quite sudden, so the space provided was basic but still comfortable for exchanging ideas. The most important thing was that the aspirations were conveyed." (Interview with Mr. Pranoto, on March 19, 2025).

Based on observations, the public space provided was relatively simple. However, community aspirations managed to be communicated. The public space provided by the RW 04 Head of Kampung Bandungsari was sufficient to accommodate the community in argumentation until reaching an agreement (see Figure 3).



Figure 1 RW 04 Public Space, Kampung Bandungsari
Source: Researcher documentation (2025)

Public Participation

Community participation in development, according to Sumaryadi (2010:46) cited in (Irawan, 2020:198), encompasses the roles of individuals or groups, both in terms of statements and tangible contributions such as ideas, labor, time, expertise, capital, or materials. The residents of Kampung Bandungsari actively participated in the public dialogue activity. Based on data collected by the researcher, the number of households in Kampung Bandungsari is 300.

Based on the researcher's observations, community participation in the dialogue activity was representative. Among the designated number, 30 residents with 7-8 individuals per RT were present. Time constraints resulted in fewer than anticipated. The following table shows the comparison of the number of Kampung Bandungsari residents who attended the public dialogue (see Table 1).

Table 1 Community Attendance Data

RW 04	Jumlah KK	Jumlah peserta
RT 01	80	8
RT 02	93	20
RT 03	100	7
RT 04	27	3

Souce: By researcher, (2025)

Based on the researcher's observations, attendance at the RESES II event, held in Kampung Bandungsari, revealed inconsistencies. Resident participation, a form of community engagement, exhibited significant disparities. RT 02 had 20 attendees, primarily consisting of PKK members, exceeding the designated limit, while RT 04 fell short of the target limit (see Figure 4).

Figure 2 Participant of The Second Recess (February 10, 2025)



Source: Researcher documentation (2025)

The RW Head further explained that public dialogue events take place annually. These events are attended by representatives from Kampung Bandungsari's RT 01, RT 02, RT 03, and RT 04, as well as government officials, in this case, the Deputy of the Semarang City DPRD. The Deputy of the Semarang City DPRD not only participates in dialogues but also attends site visits for construction projects implemented in Kampung Bandungsari, both for approved projects and ongoing construction works.

Public Discussion

The RESES II event for members of the Central Java Provincial DPRD during the second session of 2024/2025, featuring Mr. Sudarsono S and Mr. Mualim, S.Pd., M.M., M.H., Deputy Chairpersons of the Semarang City DPRD, took place at the residence of Mr. Pranoto, the RW 04 Head.

This event served as a platform for direct interaction between council members and their constituents. It was a public forum dialogue to gather community aspirations and discuss issues in Kampung Bandungsari (see Figure 5).

Figure 3 The Speaker of RESES II



Source: Researcher documentation (2025)

During the aspiration presentation session, two panelists expressed their opinions regarding road construction. The first panelist, Mr. Rosikin (52), stated: "There is a need for a connecting road, as the current road is busy, making it difficult for residents to cross, and even challenging to close the existing road during events. Therefore, we can explore the construction of a connecting road from Kampung Kaligetas directly to Jl. Raya Semarang-Boja to prevent all vehicles from passing through here."

In contrast to the first panelist, the second panelist highlighted issues experienced by residents of Mijen District. The second panelist, Ms. Mareta (50), added:

"Road construction is necessary, particularly on Jl. RM. Hadisoebeno Sosro Wardoyo, specifically in the Sabara area, which is extremely congested. It's a point where vehicles converge, leading to traffic jams every morning and evening."

Responding to these discussions, the first panelist expressed hope for building a connecting road in Kampung Bandungsari. The second panelist emphasized the importance of constructing Jl. Raya Mijen due to traffic congestion issues.

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Communicative Rationality

According to Habermas (cited in Hardiman, 2009:129), rationality is essential to ensure that all relevant issues are included in political deliberation. Habermas further emphasizes the importance of communication (cited in Hardiman, 2009:142) as a fundamental aspect of life, crucial for achieving legal legitimacy in the exchange between the political system and public spaces.

Community aspirations regarding the construction of a connecting road and road widening are rational given the traffic congestion issues. Based on the researcher's observations

of the two congested locations mentioned, road widening on Jl. RM Hadisoebeno Sosro Wardoyo is indeed necessary as traffic jams persist during morning and evening rush. The communication between the Chair of the Central Java DPRD and the community has validated this need, making it the main priority compared to building a connecting road, which is more focused on the needs of Kampung Bandungsari residents.

The construction of a connecting road is said to have economic implications. If the road is divided into two, it would also split a source of income, namely the sale of gasoline in small quantities, although the connecting road would benefit traffic flow.

The two-way communication between Kampung Bandungsari residents and the Chair of the Central Java DPRD along with the Deputy Chair of the Semarang City DPRD demonstrates the presence of democracy. Consideration is necessary to minimize errors in prioritizing these projects.

Public Space

According to Hardiman (2009:133), public space implies that citizens get to express their opinions publicly and raise various relevant issues, allowing sensitive aspirations to be facilitated by the political system. The practice of public space, as described by Isvara (2025:9), has become a site of ongoing struggle. Social, political, and cultural changes resulting from globalization, urbanization, and the influence of capitalism have led to a loss of inclusivity in public spaces. The public space provided as a platform for community aspirations in Kampung Bandungsari is located behind the house of the RW 04 Head in Tambangan (see Figure 6).

Figure 4 Profile of Public Spaces in Kampung Bandungsari



Source: Researcher documentation (2025)

Based on the researcher's observations, the theme of the public dialogue held on February 10, 2025, focused on infrastructure development and took place behind the house of the RW 04 Head in Tambangan. The public space provided proved adequate in offering a platform for community members to express their aspirations in front of council members, specifically the Deputy Speaker of the Semarang City DPRD and the Speaker of the Central Java DPRD (see Figure 7).

Figure 5 The Process of Aspiration Communication



Source: Researcher documentation (2025)

Proceduralism

Habermas's concept of deliberative democracy emphasizes fair and transparent procedures. As cited in Hardiman (2009:127-129), deliberative democracy refers to a process for participatory expression of opinions and aspirations. Citizens not only accept or reject decisions but also exercise control over government decisions.

During decision-making, procedures ensure that all voices are heard, all arguments are considered, and the final decision is based on rational dialogue. From a procedural perspective, based on observations of deliberative democracy in Kampung Bandungsari, there has been an emphasis on open public dialogue. In the dialogue process, no coercion or manipulation was found, ensuring that voices were heard and considered equally.

Legitimacy

According to Hardiman (2009:130), legitimacy does not reside in the outcome of communication but in the process itself. The more constructive the process, the more rational and open it is to public scrutiny, and the more legitimate the agreed-upon outcome becomes.

Based on observations in Kampung Bandungsari during the RESES II event, residents were empowered to actively participate, express their opinions, and engage in rational debate. Legitimacy in deliberative democracy rests on equal opportunities for expressing opinions. Decisions are made through a legitimate process because they are based on consensus reached through deliberative processes, not majority rule. The research revealed a challenge related to ensuring that all residents have access and the ability to participate in dialogue so that the deliberative outcome truly reflects the aspirations of the entire community.

Factors Hindering Public Dialogue in Kampung Bandungsari

Lack Of Awareness

Low participation in public dialogue is a major obstacle. Limited understanding of the mechanisms and benefits of participation in collective decision-making leads to apathy and inactivity among residents. This is due to low political literacy, resulting in a decision-making process dominated by a select few, failing to reflect the aspirations of all Kampung Bandungsari residents comprehensively.

Absence Of Youth

The absence of youth demonstrates a lack of youth representation in public dialogue. Young people, as a vital segment of the community, undoubtedly possess distinct perspectives, needs, and interests compared to other age groups. The non-involvement of youth in public dialogue indicates their exclusion from the decision-making process. This impacts policy outcomes, making them unresponsive to the needs of the younger generation.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of deliberative democracy in Kampung Bandungsari, drawing upon Habermas's theory of Deliberative Democracy, relies on public dialogue, which holds the potential to enhance governance and decision-making. However, the two factors mentioned above, lack of awareness and absence of youth, can collectively hinder the realization of an ideal deliberative democracy. An ideal deliberative democracy would involve the active, equal, and effective participation of all stakeholders in the decision-making process concerning road development in Kampung Bandungsari.

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