

The Role of Innovation Communication in the Development of Bali Aga

Sena Aji Prasetyo¹, Raphael Antonius Arnold Prawira², and Ardo Ardhian³

¹ Institut Komunikasi dan Bisnis LSPR, Jakarta, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

As a priority of the Government of Indonesia's economic development, rural areas have been developing innovation which derived from the leading commodities of each region. In the process of developing innovation, rural areas also receive support from various parties in the form of training, facilities and infrastructure. The theory of communication related to innovation has been widely developed by researchers until the emergence of the concept of Innovation Communication. This concept is an interaction between stakeholders in an innovation process. Studies on Innovation Communication have not been widely carried out in rural areas. This study explores the role of innovation communication that can be a lesson for various parties in facing innovation challenges as well as plans for replicating good practices in rural areas. This study was conducted in the Bali Aga area, located in Buleleng Regency, Bali Province, using the constructivism paradigm. The researchers used a qualitative approach and collected data through in-depth interviews as well as field visit observations and report analysis. The results of the study indicate that there are challenges in changing the government structure of Buleleng Regency which have an impact on the commitment to innovation development that has been built by the local community. The researcher finds that the success of innovation development in rural areas is highly dependent on each role played by each stakeholder at the macro, meso, and micro levels. In addition, this study emphasizes the importance of the role of leaders as communication promoter who can encourage collaboration between parties.

KEYWORDS

Innovation communication;
rural areas;
Bali Aga;
stakeholder;
leadership

ABSTRAK

Kawasan perdesaan yang menjadi prioritas pengembangan ekonomi Pemerintah Indonesia memiliki berbagai inovasi yang dikembangkan dari komoditas unggulan daerah. Dalam proses pengembangan inovasi, kawasan perdesaan mendapat dukungan dari berbagai pihak dalam bentuk pelatihan maupun sarana dan prasarana. Teori komunikasi terkait inovasi telah banyak dikembangkan oleh para peneliti hingga munculnya konsep Komunikasi Inovasi. Konsep ini merupakan suatu interaksi antara para pemangku kepentingan dalam suatu proses inovasi. studi

tentang Komunikasi Inovasi belum banyak dilakukan di kawasan perdesaan. Studi ini mengeksplorasi peran komunikasi inovasi yang dapat menjadi pembelajaran bagi berbagai pihak dalam menghadapi tantangan inovasi serta rencana replikasi praktik-praktik baik di kawasan perdesaan. Studi ini dilakukan di kawasan Bali Aga yang berlokasi di Kabupaten Buleleng, Provinsi Bali dengan menggunakan paradigma konstruktivisme. Peneliti menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan melakukan pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam serta observasi kunjungan lapangan dan analisa laporan. Hasil studi menunjukkan adanya tantangan dalam pergantian struktur pemerintahan Kabupaten Buleleng yang berdampak pada komitmen pengembangan inovasi yang telah dibangun masyarakat. Peneliti menemukan bahwa keberhasilan pengembangan inovasi di kawasan perdesaan sangat bergantung pada setiap peran yang dimainkan oleh masing-masing pemangku kepentingan di level makro, meso, dan mikro. Selain itu, studi ini menekankan pentingnya peran pemimpin sebagai communication promoter yang dapat mendorong kolaborasi antar pihak.

KATA KUNCI
komunikasi
inovasi; kawasan
perdesaan; Bali
Aga; pemangku
kepentingan;
kepemimpinan

INTRODUCTION

As a priority of the Government of Indonesia's economic development, rural areas have been developing innovations derived from the leading commodities of each region. In developing innovation, rural areas have benefited from many parties' support in the form of training, tools, and infrastructure. Since 2015, the Indonesian government has been assisting the village through Village Funds (in Bahasa Indonesia: Dana Desa), and this fund continues to increase every year. According to data from the Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Cultural Affairs (2020), President Jokowi stated that the allocation of Village Funds in 2020 was 72 trillion rupiahs, up from 70 trillion rupiahs in 2019. In addition, the Ministry of Village, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration have also provided production tools that can help businesses make their products. Additionally, both organizations and donor-initiatives have given their support through various training from upstream to downstream, including capacity building, strengthening institutional capacity, access to capital, and market access through both online and direct sales.

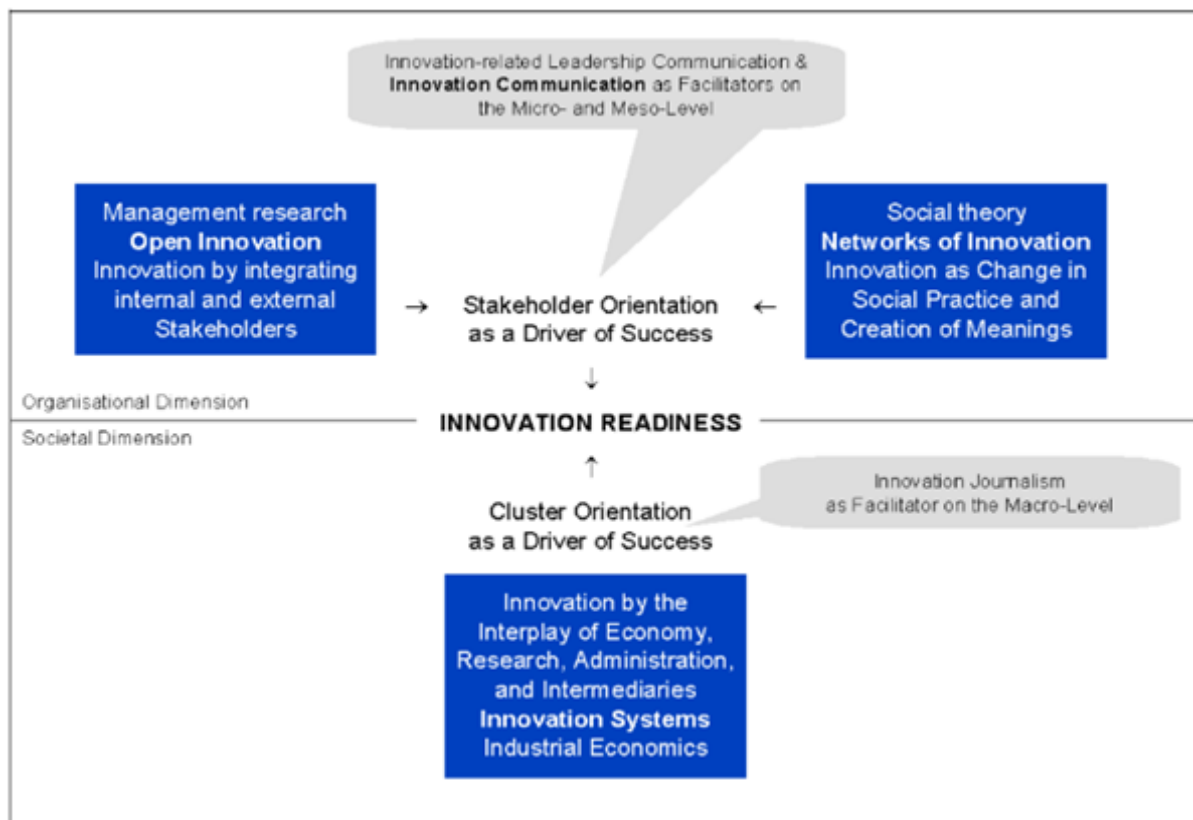
The number of parties involved in developing rural areas should be able to bring about significant changes to the economic, cultural, and social aspects. There are still many rural areas that are merely objects of economic development. The Minister of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration Abdul Halim Iskandar warned that village development is not oriented on the urge of the village elite (Kompas, 2021). Furthermore, the issuance of Law No.6/2014 on Villages (in Bahasa Indonesia: UU Desa) leads to the formation of the Village-owned Enterprise (in Bahasa Indonesia: Badan Usaha Milik Desa / BUMDes). BUMDes, as a driver of the village economy, is expected to be able to manage its potential and thus benefit the villagers. Yet so many challenges are faced by the BUMDes that village potential is poorly managed. Kusuma and Krisnadewara

(2019) mentioned that the human factor is a significant challenge that the BUMDes need to solve.

The problems in rural areas seem to make all forms of support for the villages futile. It encourages researchers to explore more about the role and involvement of various parties in developing rural innovation and how communication contributes to it.

The term innovation has been in use for a long time. In communication, Rogers invented the diffusion theory of innovation in 1983 was one of the most used. The term innovation refers to something new that has not been there and has a strong influence on everyday life or the economy (Zerfass & Huck, 2007). Innovation is considered an effort to achieve success. The recent innovations developed in the village are the derivative products produced from its leading regional commodities. For instance, bamboo in Tigawasa Village, Buleleng District, is used to make ceremonial stuff or to decorate houses with custom-ordered models. These innovations are integrated with the tourism sector to benefit one another.

Picture 1. Innovation Readiness concept



Sumber: Asngar Zerfass, 2005

Communication plays a crucial role in the process of innovation. Those in charge of contacts in companies and research institutions play a decisive role in communicating innovations (Hoi, 2004). Mast, Huck, and Zerfass (2005) introduced the concept of

innovation readiness, where innovation communication played a significant role in the innovation process. In Indonesia, research on innovation communication with case studies in rural areas has not been widely found. This study differs from the diffusion of innovation theory because innovation communication focuses more on the interactions between stakeholders in developing innovation. In contrast, the diffusion of innovation focuses on how the innovations spread.

Mast, Huck, and Zerfass define innovation communication as symbolic interactions between the organization and its stakeholders, handling new products, services, and technologies. In an article published in 2005, Zerfass explained how communication plays a vital role in the preparedness of corporate or regional innovation. As facilitators for innovation, communication plays at three levels: the macro, meso, and micro. On a macro-level, it is necessary to guarantee the information flow within clusters and innovation systems, focus on relevant topics, discuss the chances and risks of new technologies, and make research results publicly available. On a meso level, it outlines how to plan, implement, and evaluate communication about innovation. Innovation communication also sees how leaders can contribute to the ideas and processes discussed at the micro level.

The culture of Bali Aga and how its people want to show changes through various innovative programs are very interesting to be studied. The study will focus on Buleleng District, Bali Province, as one of the National Priority Rural Areas (in Bahasa Indonesia: Kawasan Perdesaan Prioritas Nasional or KPPN) according to the National Medium Term Development Plan (in Bahasa Indonesia: Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional (RPJMN)) of 2020-2024.

The Bali Aga people who live in the mountainous region are known as Bali's native society. They still live a way of life handed down by their ancestors. The Bali Aga people had a system of trust and structure that differed from that of the Balinese people on the plains (Main, 2015). However, the Bali Aga people have changed. That region is now very open to change and innovation.

The study presents how innovation communication plays an essential role in innovation development in Bali Aga, especially in the villages of Sidetapa, Cempaga, Tigawasa, Pedawa, and Banyusri (SCTPB). The study can be implemented in other towns and is helpful to other researchers who want to explore the concept of innovative communication.

METHOD

The research was carried out from June to December 2021. The research site selection is based on the assumption that the Bali Aga region is a traditional village with a pearl of solid local wisdom. Bali Aga is one of the KPPNs following RPJMN. Bali Aga also received

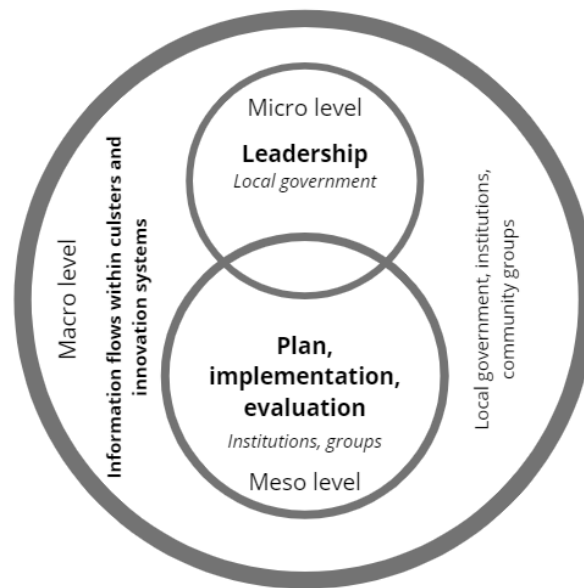
technical assistance and financial support from the Canadian government through the third phase of the Responsive Innovation Fund (RIF) program (NSLIC, 2020).

The research was conducted by looking at a phenomenon based on a constructivism paradigm. Honebein (1996) describes the philosophical paradigm of constructivism as an affirming approach that humans build their understanding and knowledge of the world by experiencing things and reflecting on the experience (Adom, Yeboah, Ankrah, 2016). Researchers believe that those involved in this study understand knowledge and phenomenon through research and experience.

Data was obtained using observation and in-depth interview techniques in June 2021. The selected informants are those involved in the RIF program, such as representatives of the Development and Research Office of Buleleng District, RIF program facilitators, and the Head of the Joint Village-owned Enterprises (in Bahasa Indonesia: BUMDes Bersama). Researchers observed and participated in the online activities of the Bali Aga through the RIF program. Secondary data is obtained from training and publications reports.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

There are two processes during the application of innovation: initiation and implementation. The initiation process means that the idea of innovation is presented and discussed by various parties. In the case of the Bali Aga region, the development of this region has been designed since 2016 in the Rural Area Development Plan (in Bahasa Indonesia: Rencana Pengembangan Kawasan Perdesaan / RPKP) by the community and the Village and Community Empowerment Office (in Bahasa Indonesia: Dinas Pemberdayaan Masyarakat dan Desa / DPMD) of Buleleng District. The plan is relevant to the RIF program that aims to develop rural areas through leading commodities innovation and strengthening BUMDes Bersama. Buleleng District was selected as one of the regions that received technical assistance from the third phase of the RIF program in the 2020 to 2021 period. In its proposal, the innovation theme proposed by Buleleng Regency is Integrated Bali Aga Ecotourism, where this innovation proposal focuses on preserving cultural and environmental customs, processing and utilization of natural resources, and increasing the capacity of human resources.

Picture 2. Conceptual framework

Source: Researchers, 2021

Based on the conceptual framework made by the researchers above and the concept of innovation readiness, this innovation communication study was conducted in areas where innovation programs were developed. Three parties play an essential role in this innovation program, namely the Local Government such as the Regional Development and Development Research Agency (Bappeda Litbang), the Village and Community Empowerment Office (Dinas PMD), the Tourism Office; RIF Program Facilitator; and Community Groups such as bamboo artisans, palm sugar producers, and coffee business actors. The local government is responsible for supervising and directing the program, the facilitator is in charge of facilitating activities, and the community is innovation actors and beneficiaries of the RIF program.

Before 2015, Bali Aga was a very closed and untouched area. The Buleleng Regency Government admits that it is difficult to interact with the Bali Aga community. This area has a lot of potentials to develop into a cultural tourism destination and has several superior commodities such as palm sugar, coffee, bamboo, and honey. However, now the people of Bali Aga are very open. The RIF program facilitator conveyed this at the start of the interview,

"In principle, the Bali Aga community is now open. Yes, it has started to open up. Very different from the previous year, 2015, the Bali Aga community seemed more closed off. After many programs entered there, more or less after 2015, it started to open until BUMDes Bersama was formed around 2018."

This statement was strengthened through an explanation from representatives of the Research and Development Agency (Balitbang) of Buleleng District,

"Today's younger generation is tech-savvy, so they want to adapt to the changes so their villages can be more economically developed."

In-depth interviews have found that at the macro level, the information flows that occur in the innovation development in the Bali region have been built smoothly since its start. The Balitbang with the Tourism Office and the Dinas PMD have socialized this innovation development program toward the Head of Village and their people, especially the artisans, palm sugar producers, coffee producers, honey producers, and tourism awareness groups, and the BUMDes Bersama.

"Communication has been good. I facilitated this innovation program through the Sub-district first. I discussed it with the Sub-district Head, responded, and then we first communicated with the Village Heads before carrying out our activities. The five Village Heads are very supportive of this activity."

The people of Bali Aga also see that the internet is the most important thing for them to be able to communicate with other communities outside the area. The community conveyed the problem of an unstable internet connection to various parties, so the government built a mini tower in Pedawa Village. With a more stable internet today, Bali Aga's people can communicate more easily.

In June 2020, researchers attended the Bali Aga woven bamboo exhibition in Ubud, which involved young people from the five Bali Aga villages. This group is facilitated by the RIF program to hold exhibitions so that they can promote their culture and superior products to a broader market. During the one-day event, the researchers saw that this group had high enthusiasm and could work together. Their communication is very effective because they can always communicate through instant messaging features such as WhatsApp. They also hold short meetings before the event starts, during the afternoon break, and before entering the evening program to share information and instructions and evaluate the entire activity in detail. Their enthusiasm for developing the Bali Aga area is evident from the preparation of the exhibition event.

Picture 3 A group of young men and women from Bali Aga posing



Source: NSLIC/NSELRED, 2021

Balitbang Buleleng uses the website, Facebook, and YouTube to convey information to the public about regional development innovation activities with the RIF program. However, this information is still limited to activity reports. Researchers did not see any vital information containing the process, positive or negative impacts, or achievements of the innovation program. Bali Aga's innovations that produce new products and collaboration between institutions must be shown to the broader community.

Under scrutiny, both Buleleng and Bali governments have not prioritized communication planning, implementation, and evaluation of innovation programs. Communication is still considered an interaction process, even though communication is an essential part of innovation. The government and beneficiary groups focus only on program activities. Still, they do not know how to communicate this innovation program to get people's attention and increase media awareness. This becomes important in innovation communication at the meso stage, where an area needs to have a plan, implementation, and evaluation of communication about innovation in the area.

When the Bali Aga area was selected as an area that received technical support from the RIF program for one year, the Buleleng Regency Government, through the Research and Development Agency and related agencies, decided to focus on developing woven bamboo, palm sugar, honey, and coffee which would be integrated with the tourism sector. . The change in the government system in Buleleng Regency in 2020 caused regional government coordination to develop innovation in the Bali Aga area to be unclear.

"Since 2020, Bappeda and Balitbang have been separated. The Head of the Local Government Working Unit (in Bahasa Indonesia: Satuan Kerja Perangkat Daerah or SKPD) is new, and each head of the SKPD has a different commitment. The innovation program should be the responsibility of Balitbang. Still, the commitment of the Head of Balitbang is also different because we focus on research and development, so miscommunication occurs there."

The Buleleng District Balitbang representative in charge of the RIF program further explained that this problem had been followed up by the Buleleng Regency Regional Secretary (in Bahasa Indonesia: Sekretaris Daerah or Sekda). The DPMD was assigned to take over this innovation program because it is closely related to the development of rural areas.

Leaders discussed at the micro level should be able to contribute significantly to innovation development. However, the occurrence of problems in the Regional Government can be concluded that the regional leaders have their concentration, making them not contribute to regional innovation. This was further strengthened by a statement from the RIF program facilitator, who said that the support from the offices in Buleleng District was decreasing. RIF program facilitators must proactively provide information on developments in RIF programs in the region. Otherwise, the various efforts made by

the Bali Aga community group will be difficult to be supported by the agencies. The RIF program facilitator continued to say that the BUMDes Bersama must be able to communicate on two sides: with stakeholders at the local government level and the Bali Aga community group.

Based on an interview with the Head of the BUMDes Bersama Bali Aga, the five villages in Bali Aga wanted to make social change by establishing the BUMDes Bersama.

"Since 2014, Sir, there is a will for us to unite perceptions for improving the level of the economy so that the Governor decree has issued in 2016 for tourist destinations planning, then 2017 for tourist destinations for the five villages."

The initiation then began to be implemented in 2017 by community leaders such as the grocery or village heads, the village council members, and the village's indigenous warriors. The BUMDes Bersama has been institutionally established since 2018, and the management began to be formed in 2019 before the Bali Aga area received assistance from the RIF program. This shows that community leaders from the five villages in the Bali Aga area have communicated with the goal of innovation or reforming their village.

The concept of communication innovation also discusses the importance of some parties' role to be the communication promoters or those capable of explaining innovation and can be engaging and convince others. In the Bali Aga area, especially in Pedawa Village, several young people have the potential to become communication promoters. These youths are members of the Tourism Awareness Group, which is very active and accustomed to meeting various domestic and international newcomers with multiple purposes such as filmmaking, historical research, and photography enthusiasts. However, according to Huck and Zerfass (2007), The role of the communication promoter is not bound to formal positions in the organizational hierarchy. Huck (2004a, p. 91-93) mentioned that the leaders should be the first to have the opportunity and the responsibility to act as communication promoters. The Bali Aga area currently does not have a leader who can involve the community and bring influence to convey good practices and examples of innovations in the region so that these efforts can be more widespread.

CONCLUSION

Community groups in the Bali Aga area with high enthusiasm and desire are an advantage in creating social change. At the macro level, communication carried out by community groups as beneficiaries have been efficient and very effective. Community groups can communicate with the Local Government, BUMDes Bersama, Community Leaders, and RIF program facilitators. At the meso level, the Bali Aga area does not yet have an excellent plan to communicate these innovations. At the micro level, the leaders have not contributed much to the process and sustainability of innovation in the Bali Aga area. It

is necessary to have leaders who can tell stories about the Bali Aga area and how this area is innovating to improve people's welfare.

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