

**A Portrait of contemporary life in a  
rural Javanese farming community in  
the era of globalisation**

**By**

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## **Executive Summary**

This research is an empirical study based on the stories of rural villagers living in a small village in the tobacco-growing region of Central Java. It analyses the different factors that do and will continue to influence the future economic, social and political development potential of this Indonesian rural community. It makes this analysis in the context of considering the impact of two phenomena, that of Reformasi and globalisation.<sup>1</sup>

This community was chosen on the basis that the researcher had an opportunity to live in this community and form relationships with local people that allowed such research to be conducted in a short period. In addition it was chosen on the basis that being a community almost totally dependent on agriculture it may give some insight into the impact in particular of the phenomena of globalisation on communities dependent on agriculture.

This community faces a period that is marked by great changes and uncertainty economically, socially and politically. The 1970s and early 1980s saw dramatic changes in local conditions economically and socially. A group of local farmers played a significant role in initiating and implementing community projects that resulted in tangible social development in the context of increasingly stable economic conditions and greater control over their means of production. The family that historically has held both economic and political control in this community for generations played a key role in these changes through providing economic resources and supporting the initiatives of local people. The relationship between these two groups can be described as a partnership relationship. While the landowning family

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<sup>1</sup> Reformasi refers to the process of political changes in Indonesia since the fall of Suharto and the end of the New Order period of Indonesian history.

played a leadership role, it would have been difficult for these changes to come about with such success had it not been for the initiative and capability of the village community as a whole.

These factors coincided with a period of economic growth that was taking place throughout Asia as a result of internationally supported government programs to raise the level of, in particular, rice production to meet national food needs. It was a period of political stability enforced by the New Order dictatorship through the strict regulation of social and political activity. New Order programs ensured political control and social stability by force if necessary. Community programs initiated by the New Order government initiated social groups around issues of culture, religious worship and community and social development that acted as tools for maintaining community stability.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast, the period of the 1990s until now has been a period of change and upheaval. At a local level it has been a period of generational change, with the generation that led the community in the 1970s and 1980s handing community decision-making responsibility to the next generation.

This generation's social and political outlook and confidence is inhibited<sup>3</sup> by factors such as limited education, limited life experience and the social conservatism and socialised fear of a generation brought up during the New Order era.

The long-standing client-patron relation within the local community has reinforced this social conservatism where locals often defer decisions or wait for the initiative of the patron landowner. In this generational transition the younger

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<sup>2</sup> Local landowners led these programs, for example programs of PKK or the community prosperity program.

<sup>3</sup> This refers to the families of small farmers and is not applicable to the children of the large landholders.

generation of large landowners has largely not been present in the community and the current family manager already in her 70s, lacks initiative, creativity and the ability to work in cooperation with the community, in stark contrast to the period of the 1970s and 1980s.

This community at this time lacks the capacity to fully involve all of the socially and economic members of its community. Women have no formal role in public life or formal community decision-making. The growing economic crisis in Indonesia and its impact at the local level is profoundly increasing the work burden and economic responsibility of women in this community. Despite this women have no voice or right in community decision making.

One of the factors that support this community's ability to survive economically is the system of reciprocal cooperation. This system is utilised in the economic sphere at harvest time. Reciprocal cooperation is essential to guarantee a successful harvest, as most families are unable to pay wages to people to assist.

Reciprocal cooperation is essential for the fulfilment of community activities such as celebrations of weddings and circumcisions and community obligations such as funerals. These communal activities are profoundly social and in stark contrast to the relative individualist and socially isolated experience of economic and domestic labour of individual family households. This social experience reinforces and cultural belief of the importance of community and social responsibility that in many areas of Indonesia has begun to disintegrate under the impact of the introduction of capitalist social relations of production.

Despite this system of reciprocal cooperation the outlook of small farmers remains profoundly individualist. The basic unit of production is the family

household. Individual families carry out every day economic life and domestic activities. Issues of land management, instruments of production, cost of production, search for markets and sale of produce is largely carried out individually. Each household manages almost all aspects domestic responsibility individually.<sup>4</sup> The small economic base of each household has limited farmers' ability to purchase and utilise technology that could increase the productive capacity of the community.

The local focus and limited life experience of most people outside of their immediate community also limits the ability of most people to consider the potential opportunities and value of building networks and relationships with people and organisations outside of their community. For example this community has almost no contact with organisations that are active in providing valuable resources including material support or education to farmers.

All land owned in this community is worked by the people that live in it. The community has a history of shared communal development and is skilled in a range of aspects of community development needs, for example, road building and the supply of water. Therefore there is a large potential community resource available if people are prepared to take a collective decision and collective risk to share economic and social resources. One example is the purchase of appropriate technologies on a collective basis.

Outside of the immediate community, Indonesia as a whole faces a period of ongoing economic instability. Issues that are common to most small farmers in Indonesia such as rising costs of production, the monopolisation of trade of their produce by big companies, the impact of imported agricultural products on the local

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<sup>4</sup> The one exception to this is the role of kinship ties. Some families will assist other family members economically if they are able.

market, rising prices of household needs such as fuel, basic foodstuffs and education of children are significant in this community. Despite this, these challenges are still resolved by each small farming household individually.

The lack of women's ability to be active in community discussion and role in community decision making is particularly relevant to this issue as in general women who play the role of family financial managers. Without the opportunity to discuss these issues collectively they will remain individual household problems.

Many of these issues are and can be significantly influenced by national government policies. Despite this local people feel, and indeed are at this time, disenfranchised from the political process of regional, provincial and national politics. The people currently acting as formal decision makers at the most local level are a generation of people that grew up during a political period where the right to hold political views or ideas different to that of government was not allowed.

It is extremely common to hear the comment <sup>5</sup> that life was better during the Suharto era. This is sometimes expressed in terms of Indonesia not needing political parties who are all corrupt, but a strong leadership that could possibly come from non-political organisations such as the military.

The crisis of small farmers in this community is not a local experience. The majority of Indonesia's small farmer communities face the same issues. In agricultural sectors that have been hardest hit by economic crisis as a result of government policies, farmers have begun to protest. As the social and economic crisis for these communities intensifies and spreads it is likely that social protest will also increase. The government has not responded to their issues. It is unlikely that a return to

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<sup>5</sup> This comment is common not only in this community but in many of Indonesia's poor rural and urban communities.

military rule in Indonesia would allow farmers to express their opposition to government policy through demonstrations of collective public protest.

The future of this community will be influenced by many and variable factors. The community has social and economic “capital” in the form of land, labour collective skills and a long-term experience of collective community organisation. At a local level, this community may benefit from a collective discussion of social and economic issues and concrete proposals for community development. Some attempts have been made by the younger generation of the local landowning family but due to their lack of ability to live in the community until recently, as well as a lack of a group of small farmers ready and willing to respond to new initiatives, until now this has not come to fruition.

The community may benefit from greater exposure to outside experiences, either through opportunities to visit and directly learn from other rural community experiences, or through the invitation of organisations and individuals that can understand and respond concretely and sensitively to the needs of the community.

The impact of the national political climate and the disenfranchisement of people from politics is a more difficult issue to overcome. Community education that could assist people’s ability to understand the causes of the current political and economic crisis may be an important tool in assisting this community to consider how to increase their social and political influence at this level of politics.

The issue of women’s social position can play a significant role in this period. If this community is able to face the challenge of integrating all of its economically and socially active members it faces a greater chance of responding to the issues that it faces.

## **Kesimpulan.**

Penelitian ini adalah sebuah studi impiris yang berdasarkan cerita-cerita dari penduduk yang tinggal di sebuah desa petani tembakau di Jawa Tengah. Peneliti menganalisa berbagai faktor yang selalu dan akan mempunyai pengaruh terhadap masa depan dan potensi pembangunan ekonomi, sosial dan politik masyarakat pedesaan di Indonesia. Penelitian ini membuat analisa dalam lingkup dua fenomena yaitu reformasi dan globalisasi<sup>6</sup>.

Komunitas ini dipilih atas dasar peneliti berkesempatan untuk hidup bersama komunitas tersebut dan membangun hubungan langsung dengan penduduk lokal meskipun dalam jangka waktu yang terbatas. Selain itu, komunitas ini dipilih karena hampir semua anggotanya bergantung kepada sektor pertanian sehingga dampak globalisasi terhadap masyarakat petani dapat dianalisa.

Komunitas ini menghadapi era yang ditandai oleh perubahan-perubahan besar dan ketidakpastian secara ekonomi, sosial dan politik. Di tahun tujuh puluhan dan awal delapan puluhan terjadi perubahan-perubahan drastis pada kondisi ekonomi dan sosial. Sekelompok petani lokal memainkan peranan penting dalam berinisiatif dan menjalankan proyek-proyek komunitas yang menghasilkan pembangunan sosial yang nyata dan kondisi dimana mereka mempunyai kontrol dalam berproduksi. Di sana terdapat sebuah keluarga petani yang secara historis mempunyai kontrol ekonomi dan politik. Selama beberapa generasi keluarga ini memainkan peranan penting dalam perubahan-perubahan dengan memberikan sumber-sumber ekonomi dan mendukung inisiatif penduduk lokal. Hubungan antara keluarga pemegang peranan dan penduduk lainnya dapat dinamakan hubungan '*partnership*'. Meskipun petani pemilik tanah memegang peranan penting, tanpa inisiatif dan kapasitas penduduk secara keseluruhan, perubahan-perubahan berarti tidak akan terjadi.

Faktor-faktor ini bertepatan dengan masa pertumbuhan ekonomi yang sedang berlangsung di Asia dimana dunia internasional mendukung program-program pemerintah untuk menaikkan produksi beras demi memenuhi kebutuhan nasional. Sebuah masa dimana kestabilan politik diselenggarakan oleh pemerintahan diktatur Orde Baru melalui peraturan-peraturan sosial dan politik yang keras. Program-program Orde Baru menjamin stabilitas sosial dan politik bila perlu dengan kekerasan.. Program-program yang diprakarsai oleh pemerintahan Orde Baru dengan membentuk kelompok-kelompok sosial yang membawa isu-isu kebudayaan, keagamaan dan pembangunan sosial yang dijadikan alat untuk memelihara stabilitas masyarakat<sup>7</sup>.

Sebaliknya, pada era sembilan puluhan sampai saat ini terjadi banyak pergantian dan kemajuan. Pada tingkat lokal merupakan masa transisi generasi, dimana generasi yang memimpin pada era tujuh puluhan sampai delapan puluhan menyerahkan penentuan keputusan kepada generasi penerus.

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<sup>6</sup> Reformasi adalah sebuah proses dimana terjadi perubahan-perubahan politik di Indonesia sejak jatuhnya Suharto dan Orde Barunya.

<sup>7</sup> Pemilik tanah lokal membimbing program ini, sebagai contoh ialah program PKK.

Wawasan sosial politik dan kepercayaan diri dari generasi penerus dibatasi<sup>8</sup> oleh banyak faktor termasuk terbatasnya tingkat pendidikan, pengalaman hidup dan konservatisme sosial dan ketakutan yang telah ditanamkan selama era Orde Baru.

Hubungan klien-pelindung yang telah lama terbentuk di masyarakat lokal adalah faktor pendukung utama konservatisme sosial, dimana mereka menunda atau menunggu inisiatif dari pemilik tanah. Pada transisi generasi ini, generasi penerus dari keluarga pemilik tanah tidak bertempat tinggal di dalam komunitas ini. Selain itu penentu keputusan yang berasal dari keluarga pemilik tanah sudah memasuki usia lanjut yang mengakibatkan kurangnya inisiatif, kreatifitas dan kemampuan untuk bekerja sama dengan masyarakat lokal. Hal ini sangat jauh berseberangan dengan apa yang terjadi dimasa tujuh puluhan dan delapan puluhan.

Pada saat ini komunitas ini tidak mempunyai kapasitas untuk melibatkan semua anggotanya secara sosial dan ekonomi. Wanita tidak mempunyai peranan formal di kehidupan umum atau pengambilan keputusan yang signifikan pada komunitas. Krisis ekonomi dan dampaknya di tingkat bawah semakin memburuk di Indonesia, yang juga mengakibatkan peningkatan beban kerja dan tanggung jawab ekonomi kepada wanita di komunitas ini. Akan tetapi wanita-wanita ini tidak mempunyai suara dan hak dalam penentuan keputusan komunitas.

Salah satu faktor penting yang mendukung kemampuan komunitas ini untuk bertahan hidup secara ekonomi adalah sistem gotong-royong. Sistem ini berlangsung terutama pada masa panen. Gotong-royong sangatlah penting untuk menjamin kesuksesan sebuah panen karena hampir semua keluarga dalam komunitas ini tidak sanggup untuk membayar tenaga guna memanen hasil pertanian.

Selain itu gotong-royong juga sangat penting untuk memenuhi kebutuhan komunitas lainnya seperti upacara pernikahan, sunatan, pemakaman dan lain-lain. Kegiatan-kegiatan komunal tersebut sangat bertolak belakang dengan pengalaman sosial yang terisolir dan sifat individualis di setiap keluarga anggota komunitas. Kegiatan sosial dan budaya gotong-royong adalah tanggung-jawab sosial dan inti dari kehidupan di sebuah komunitas yang pada saat ini di Indonesia sudah mulai terkikis oleh dampak hubungan sosial berproduksi yang diperkenalkan oleh kaum kapitalis.

Meskipun para petani kecil menjalankan sistem gotong-royong, mereka tetap bersifat individualis. Unit dasar berproduksi adalah sebuah keluarga. Setiap keluarga menjalankan kehidupan ekonomi dan aktivitas sehari-hari secara perseorangan. Isu-isu yang berkenaan dengan pengolahan tanah, alat-alat produksi, biaya produksi, pencarian pangsa pasar dan penjualan hasil produksi tidak dilakukan secara kolektif. Setiap keluarga mengatur hampir semua segi dan tanggung-jawab rumah tangga sendiri-sendiri<sup>9</sup>. Basis ekonomi yang kecil dari setiap keluarga petani membatasi kapasitas mereka untuk membeli dan menggunakan teknologi yang dapat meningkatkan kapasitas produksi komunitas tersebut.

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<sup>8</sup> Hanya terjadi pada keluarga petani kecil, tetapi tidak terjadi pada anak-anak keluarga besar pemilik tanah.

<sup>9</sup> Satu perkecualian adalah hubungan kekeluargaan (kinship ties). Beberapa keluarga akan membantu anggota keluarganya secara ekonomi apabila mereka mampu.

Fokus lokal dan terbatasnya hubungan dengan komunitas-komunitas di sekitarnya mengurangi kemungkinan untuk menjajagi potensi-potensi yang ada dan juga menghilangkan nilai pembangunan jaringan dengan orang atau organisasi lain diluar komunitas mereka. Sebagai contoh, komunitas ini hampir tidak mempunyai hubungan dengan organisasi-organisasi yang secara aktif menawarkan sarana produksi dan pelatihan pertanian.

Semua tanah yang tersedia di wilayah komunitas ini diolah oleh penduduk setempat. Komunitas ini mempunyai sejarah pembangunan desa secara kolektif dan mempunyai berbagai keahlian dalam memenuhi kebutuhan komunitas secara keseluruhan. Sebagai contoh ialah pembangunan jalan umum dan sistem pengairan baik irigasi maupun pengadaan air bersih. Sebenarnya komunitas ini mempunyai potensi dan sumber daya yang besar apabila mereka bersedia untuk membuat kesepakatan kolektif dan berani mengambil resiko secara kolektif sehingga mereka dapat berbagi sumber-sumber ekonomi dan sosial atas dasar kolektifitas.

Diluar komunitas ini, Indonesia secara keseluruhan sedang menghadapi ketidakstabilan ekonomi yang berkelanjutan. Pengenalan kebijaksanaan perdagangan bebas termasuk liberalisasi perdagangan hasil pertanian hanya memberi keuntungan kepada pemilik agribisnis besar dan importir-importir asing. Akan tetapi bagi petani kecil kebijaksanaan ini merupakan malapetaka yang menakutkan. Pokok persoalan yang umumnya dihadapi oleh petani kecil di Indonesia adalah naiknya biaya produksi, monopoli perdagangan hasil produksi pertanian oleh perusahaan-perusahaan besar, dampak-dampak negatif dari produk pertanian impor yang semakin banyak tersedia di pasar lokal, meroketnya harga kebutuhan sehari-hari termasuk BBM, sembako, dan semakin mahalnya pendidikan untuk anak-anak mereka. Meskipun begitu, tantangan-tantangan ini masih dihadapi oleh keluarga kecil petani secara perseorangan.

Kekurang-aktifnya wanita dalam pertemuan-pertemuan formal komunitas dan tidak berperannya wanita dalam pengambilan keputusan formal adalah yang paling relevan terhadap pokok permasalahan, meskipun pada umumnya wanita adalah pemegang peran dalam pengaturan finansial keluarga. Tanpa kesempatan untuk mendiskusikan permasalahan utama secara kolektif, maka hal ini akan terus menjadi masalah keluarga sendiri-sendiri.

Banyak dari permasalahan pokok ini dipengaruhi secara signifikan oleh kebijaksanaan pemerintah. Meskipun begitu masyarakat daerah merasa, dan tentunya pada saat ini, dihilangkan haknya (*disenfranchisement*) dari proses politik di tingkat regional, propinsi dan nasional.

Banyak orang yang sekarang duduk sebagai pengambil keputusan formal pada tingkat daerah berasal dari generasi yang tumbuh disebuah masa politik dimana tidak diijinkan untuk mempunyai hak menyuarakan pendapat politik atau ide-ide yang berseberangan dengan pemerintah.

Sangatlah umum untuk mendengar komentar-komentar<sup>10</sup> bahwa kehidupan pada era Suharto lebih baik dibandingkan dengan kehidupan pada saat ini. Hal ini sering

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<sup>10</sup> Komentar-komentar tersebut tidak saja disampaikan oleh anggota komunitas ini tetapi sudah menjadi pendapat umum baik di perkotaan maupun di pedesaan miskin di Indonesia.

disampaikan bahwa Indonesia tidak membutuhkan partai-partai politik yang semuanya korup, tetapi sebuah kepemimpinan yang kuat yang berasal dari non partai politik, seperti TNI.

Krisis petani kecil di komunitas ini bukan sebuah pengalaman lokal. Mayoritas petani kecil di Indonesia menghadapi permasalahan yang sama. Sektor pertanian adalah sektor yang paling terpuruk dimasa krisis ekonomi sebagai hasil dari kebijaksanaan pemerintah, petani sudah mulai memprotes<sup>11</sup>. Apabila krisis sosial dan ekonomi yang melanda komunitas-komunitas petani semakin memburuk, ada kemungkinan besar protes sosial akan semakin menguat. Pemerintah sampai saat ini belum merespon isu-isu ini secara serius. Apabila militer kembali mengambil kepemimpinan di Indonesia, sangatlah tidak mungkin bagi petani untuk mendapatkan ruang bersuara yang berposisi terhadap pemerintah melalui demonstrasi dan protes-protes kolektif.

Komunitas ini mempunyai 'kapital' sosial dan ekonomi dalam bentuk tanah, ketrampilan kolektif, dan pengalaman organisasi komunitas kolektif. Pada tingkat lokal, komunitas ini mungkin mendapat keuntungan dari diskusi-diskusi kolektif yang membahas pokok permasalahan sosial dan ekonomi dan proposal konkrit untuk pembangunan komunitas. Beberapa usaha telah dilakukan oleh anggota keluarga pemilik tanah tapi belum membuahkan hasil yang nyata. Hal ini disebabkan oleh kurangnya kemampuannya untuk hidup di dalam komunitas ini dan juga dikarenakan oleh kurangnya inisiatif dan kemauan petani-petani kecil setempat untuk merespon hal-hal diluar kebiasaan mereka sehari-hari.

Komunitas ini akan mendapatkan banyak manfaat apabila bersentuhan dengan pengalaman dari luar melalui kunjungan dan belajar secara langsung dari komunitas pedesaan lainnya atau melalui kunjungan dari organisasi/perorangan yang dapat memahami dan merespon secara konkrit terhadap kebutuhan komunitas ini.

Dampak dari iklim politik nasional dan pencabutan hak untuk memilih (*disenfranchisement*) berpolitik lebih sulit untuk diselesaikan. Pendidikan komunitas dapat menolong kemampuan masyarakat untuk mengerti penyebab krisis politik dan ekonomi pada saat ini dan juga sebagai alat penting untuk menolong komunitas ini untuk meningkatkan pengaruh sosial dan politik mereka di iklim politik sekarang ini.

Isu posisi sosial wanita dapat memainkan peran penting saat ini. Bila komunitas ini dapat menghadapi tantangan untuk menyatukan semua anggotanya yang masih aktif secara sosial dan ekonomi maka mereka akan mendapatkan kesempatan yang lebih besar untuk merespon pokok-pokok permasalahan yang dihadapi.

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<sup>11</sup> Banyak dari 'reformasi' dari liberalisasi peraturan perdagangan disektor pertanian, kebijaksanaan pemerintah dalam penetapan harga produk pertanian diprakarsai oleh hasil persetujuan Bank Dunia/IMF/WTO sejak tahun 1994.

## **Chapter 1**

Arriving in Indonesia for the first time I was struck by the incredible poverty that so many of Indonesia's people experience every day of their life. Early on I had the opportunity to visit a rural community in Central Java and due to a string of circumstances came to live there for a period of 9 months. When I first arrived in this community I was not yet able to speak Indonesian and the local language was in fact Javanese.

However over a period of months my language skills improved and I had the opportunity to begin to talk to people about the conditions of life of these Indonesian farmers. Casual conversation very quickly pointed to the possibility that every planting season farmers were experiencing financial losses. At the same time while no one in this community apart from those few that owned large amounts of land had large amounts of disposable income, young people born from the early 1980s onwards clearly now had had the opportunity to for example to complete high school. This was in stark contrast to their parents and also the generation born during the 1960s. I wanted to know how this was possible. One of the first questions that came to my mind was how were people surviving economically.

Secondly, having ready access to Indonesian newspapers and becoming a regular reader I was struck by the amount of discussion and debate about the economic crisis in agriculture in Indonesia and wanted to know how small farmers were surviving this economic crisis.

It was these factors that led to the development of the idea for this research. This research became an empirical study based on the stories of local people that attempts to analyse the different factors that do and will continue to influence the future

economic, social and political development potential of this Indonesian rural community.

Contemporary academic literature regarding development potential in Indonesia often cites two major phenomena as having a significant impact on development outcomes in Indonesia today. These phenomena are the era of Indonesian “reformasi” or reformation and the incorporation of Indonesia economically and politically into an increasingly globalised world.

The most recent period in Indonesia’s history is often referred to as the period of reformation. There is much commentary about the extent of “reforms” during the reformasi period. Reformation was expected to deliver all kinds of changes for communities of ordinary people in Indonesia. This research documents the reality of the experience of reformasi for rural communities and what has it delivered in terms of social, political and economic changes.

January 2003 saw the beginning of the implementation of the Asian Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) Globalisation is considered to be a phenomenon that will benefit the majority of the world’s people with the implementation of its economic and political policies. Daily there are articles in Indonesia’s daily newspapers that make some reference to globalisation, or the global “free market” and its impact on local Indonesian people. For examples, articles about the latest case example of farmers bankrupt as a result of lack of ability to compete with foreign imported agricultural products. This research attempts to draw some preliminary conclusions about the impact of globalisation for rural communities in Indonesia.

In the context of these two factors, this research attempts to understand the self-acting capacity of a rural community to respond to significant life issues and to direct

the future development potential of its community. What factors support their self-acting capacity and what factors block this potential.

### ***Methodology***

Using the case study of the condition of one community in one dusun in the tobacco growing region of Temanggung, Central Java, this research uses the direct experiences of this community as a framework to analyse how these factors impact on and determine the potential and existing capacity of ordinary people to control and shape the future of their life in a rural community in Indonesia.

This research is based on many informal discussions with many people living in this village during a period of two months. Prior to the commencement of the formal study, I was able to live in this community for several months. This greatly assisted my ability to discuss openly with people many issues that had she only just arrived in this community and directly proceeded to begin the study would not have been possible.

The methodology for this kind of research deserves serious attention in order to understand the results. The first point is that this two-month research period is only adequate to begin to understand the complex factors that shape the lives and potential capacity of this rural community. This research would benefit greatly from a more extended study as well as a comparative study with another village with very different social, economic and cultural indicators.

Becoming active in the local community, for example, through teaching English every week and being involved in one of the youth group's projects prior to the formal research period, opened up new and closer relationships with people in the

community. The relationships that have been developed to this date would now allow me to gain greater access to both qualitative and quantitative information.

This research is a first attempt at a qualitative research project in this community. Contemporary academic literature that could provide reference for this project is scarce. This research project is not able to be a complete record of a social, cultural and economic system. What was possible was to begin to map these various factors.

In addition a whole chapter could be devoted to the question of negotiating Indonesian bureaucracy in order to seek formal permission to conduct academic research in Indonesia.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to informal discussions with a wide range of people, there were four local people who became key informants for this project. Due to limitations of time some of the information is incomplete. The information does rely heavily on the information provided by the key informants and due to time limitations it was inevitable that not all information could be extensively checked with a sufficiently large group of people. The information is gathered directly from people's remembered experience or remembered knowledge of the various questions addressed.

Almost all of the information was gathered in an informal setting, not taped and no notes were taken during the discussion process. The reason for this is that informal discussions were clearly the most effective way to encourage people to talk freely about many issues.<sup>13</sup> Had the discussions been more formal, had notes been taken or discussions recorded people would not have felt able to speak so freely. Therefore the

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<sup>12</sup> Three months were spent attempting obtain formal permission to conduct research in another community in the region of Bawen, Central Java. After three months of frustration, this attempt had to be given up and the site of research became the place that had become my home for most of my time in Indonesia.

<sup>13</sup> This fact is noted by other researchers who have conducted empirical studies in rural communities in Java. See Berningjausen, Jutta & Kerstan, Bergit. P4

information recorded is heavily reliant on the memory of the researcher. After discussions the researcher would record as much information as could be recalled. Two semi-formal interviews were conducted and taped and this information assisted in confirming information that had been gathered over the length of the study.

While my capability in Indonesian language is reasonable the research was inhibited by language difficulties. The local language is Javanese not Indonesian and the majority of the discussions were conducted in Indonesian. In general language was not considered a major barrier to communication, however there were two weaknesses, my still limited knowledge of Indonesian language and inability to communicate in the local Javanese language. I considered using a translator for some of the discussions, however decided that this was likely limit people's willingness to speak so freely.

This research is divided into six chapters. The first chapter describes the context for this research, the research proposition and the methodology. Chapter two provides information regarding the history of development of this community since the 1970s. Chapter three attempts to document and analyse formal and informal decision making structures in this community. Chapter four documents the economic base and accompanying social relations of the community. Chapter five considers other factors that influence the development capacity of this community, in particular the significance of socially ascribed social roles for men and women respectively. Chapter Six draws conclusions about the significance of variable factors that currently and are likely to continue to influence the development prospects of this community.

## Chapter 2

This village community is located at the foot of Mount Sumbing in the tobacco-growing region of Temanggung, Central Java. It consists of forty-four family households, however if “families” are counted on the basis of the number of Kepala Keluarga (Heads of families), that is male-headed households there are forty. In households that have no Kepala Keluarga, these family groups are not statistically counted.

There are two main economic/social groups or classes. One of these groups has large landholdings<sup>14</sup> that in previous times have been sufficiently productive for these families to be considered middle class by Indonesian standards.

The second class is that of small farmers. Twelve families own small land holdings themselves and many of the remaining families work the land of local landowners in this community. Around half of those that own land own around one keso<sup>15</sup> and the other half between three and four keso. Those that have very small landholdings work the land of large landholders. Those that do not work the land of the local landowners, work on land in the next closest village. On average these small farmers work a land area of one quarter to one third of a hectare. Forty families are categorised as being small farming families.

Community life has changed dramatically in this community since the early 1970s. Most prominently, the economic condition of this community has advanced significantly and has been increasingly stable to the point of allowing the majority of people to guarantee that children can complete the highest level of high school education if they wish to do so as well as guarantee a minimum standard of living that

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<sup>14</sup> while the land area is not large by international farming standards in rural Javanese conditions these landowners own large holdings

<sup>15</sup> 12 keso is approximately equivalent to one hectare.

means that indicators such as health, nutrition and access to education (high school level) have become relatively guaranteed.<sup>16</sup> While this community is a poor community there are no families classified as extremely poor and aside from the land owning family no families would be classified as middle class. There are comparative differences in relative prosperity from one family to another.

During the 1970s the long-standing system of land working in this community changed. Prior to the implementation of this new system, those that did not own land worked for wages for the local landowner. Wages were paid in unhulled rice. In the early 1970s one day's wage was half a kilo of rice and workers would eat in the landowner's house.

During the 1970s as the local landlord became unable to oversee agriculture directly in the field, the next generation<sup>17</sup> changed the system of land working. Those farmers that had previously worked directly for the landowner entered into agreements to work the land on the basis of a new system. Depending on the season and the crop that was grown these agreements gave the worker of the land the right to decide what was grown, how it was grown and the resulting crop as well as the cost of production was shared on a pre agreed basis.<sup>18</sup>

This system allowed people the opportunity to begin to accumulate money incomes. Previously this had been very difficult if not impossible. This change gave this generation of families' greater flexibility and control over production and greater share of the product of production.

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<sup>16</sup> Attachment 1 shows general developmental indicators for this community

<sup>17</sup> The generation referred to as holding decision making responsibility in the 1970s and 1980s are today in their 60s, 70s and 80s. The generation referred to as the current generation are on average in their 30s and 40s. These age groups are not exclusive but provide a reference point.

<sup>18</sup> See chapter on economic base for description of system of land working.

In addition, there were several other key factors that influenced the developmental potential and capacity of this community at this time. National agricultural policies during the 1970s and 1980s included programs to guarantee stable low cost production inputs. These programs were aimed at supporting increases in national rice production.<sup>19</sup> This program included the introduction of new rice varieties, programs to improve the efficiency of irrigation systems and the introduction of chemical fertilisers and pesticides. Programs were subsidised and farmers were provided with credit at the beginning of planting season to purchase necessary inputs. The central government maintained a monopoly on seeds and fertilisers. These programs are often referred to as the “green revolution” that did result in massive expansion of rice production.<sup>20</sup>

In addition roads part of the national development program included improved national transport infrastructure such as roads. Locally built vehicles became more readily available which assisted farmers to gain better direct market access for the sale of their produce.

According to anecdotal evidence, during this period of transition, long-standing family and community relations between producers and traders of tobacco, assisted in guaranteeing relatively stable prices of tobacco. During the 1970s and 1980s individual small farmers were in a position to bargain over questions of price when the quality of tobacco was guaranteed.

During the 1970s, one of the programs introduced as part of the New Order development program was Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga (PKK) or family

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<sup>19</sup> These programs were introduced across Asia often with funding from overseas governments or development agencies

<sup>20</sup> Hefner, Robert. 1990. *The political economy of mountain Java: an interpretative history*. University of California Press, Ltd. California, United States of America. P82

prosperity programme. PKK was the only formal “women’s organisation” that women were allowed to participate. During the period of the New Order regime PKK functioned largely as de facto instrument of government<sup>21</sup>. While PKK could not be seen as a representative body for women according to local people the programs were effective in assisting in the process of community development. In the case of this village, one of the large landholders, a woman, became the first head of PKK<sup>22</sup>. While the community received little funding for the implementation of the programs, the programs had to be implemented and results reported to the village head of PKK<sup>23</sup>.

The programs included education about cooking and nutrition including program for growing vegetables and fish for domestic household consumption. There were programs about sewing, sanitation, washing and animal husbandry. There were education programs about domestic life and housing conditions, such as the principles of ventilation and building domestic housing for people and separate stable areas for livestock. During the 1970s and 1980s houses were regularly inspected to monitor the progress of implementation of improvements in housing. If they did not meet standards or were not making progress they would be directed and assisted to improve conditions.

During this same period local people took initiative to improve the infrastructure of the village. The local landowners assisted financially with the purchase and supply of materials required. Informants from both social groups hold the view that this community collectively is very skilled and capable of managing development

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<sup>21</sup> Berningjausen, Jutta & Kerstan, Bergit, p 167

<sup>22</sup> According to Berningjausen and Kerstan, P62, historically, PKK was led almost exclusively by middle class women or “elite” women. This helped to guarantee a strict hierarchical order informal and informal groups. Today PKK is headed by a woman who is a small farmer. Local interest in PKK beyond a handful of women is almost non-existent.

<sup>23</sup> It is presumed that the implementation of PKK programs was monitored by local government and military officials as it was in other parts of Indonesia.

programs themselves. During the 1980s this community planned and implemented the piping of water supply from a natural spring directly to their village. They built roads, maintained village facilities, installed poles for the supply of electricity as just a few examples.

### **Chapter 3**

This chapter analyses the structure of community organisation and the associated political and democratic decision making processes in this community. This is analysed in the context of trying to understand what are the factors that support or hinder the capacity of this community to make decisions that assist them to respond to urgent needs individually and as a community?

This question has to be considered in its historical context. Various factors could affect these structures and processes of decision-making. This research cannot document the different historical experiences that shape the current democratic condition in this community, however the following factors considered during the process of research and process of interpretation of results. What is the feudal and colonial experience of this community? How did it experience the process of achieving independence from Dutch colonialism? What was the experience of the Sukarno period and the period of the New Order?

Some context must be given to the experience of the New Order regime as it is the most recent period of political and social history. Research on Indonesian communities during and subsequent to the New Order period as well as stories of people throughout Indonesia points to the dominant role of the military and police in day to day life and specifically political processes. This community however reported

that there was little direct contact with military in this region in general and this immediate community has no direct links with local military or police forces.

Some members of the community commented that during the New Order period there was a lack of political space and people feared holding political opinions that did not agree with or were critical of government policies. In general the political atmosphere regarding politics has relaxed and people are less afraid to discuss politics or express political opinions openly. Since the beginning of the Reformasi period some people that regularly travel outside the local community feel that the political climate is more relaxed. In general people feel that regarding political space for people to discuss politics after the end of the New Order period is positive.

At the same time most people comment that life was better, more stable, safer and secure during the Period of Suharto's presidency. This is particularly relevant to the question of economic security that has become increasingly unpredictable. When questioned further people identify that this instability in fact began during the early 1990s. When asked to consider whether factors such as the economic crisis (Krisis Moneter) of 1997, could be a result of the New Order economic policies most people believe that to be the case. However lack of information and lack of ability to analyse relevant economic and political processes during the 1990s until now mean that people are not able to assess whether the current economic instability relates directly to the political changes of the reformation period or a longer term crisis that began during the New Order era.

Many farmers in this community believe that current central government policies towards agriculture and specifically the needs of small farmers are having a negative impact. Some are aware that a significant factor influencing these policy decisions is the implementation of policies that are required under agreements such as AFTA

(Asian Free Trade Agreement) or agreements with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or World Trade Organisation (WTO). Those that have some understanding of these issues believe that the introduction of free market is benefiting those that are already rich, in particular those that monopolise trade of their produce, and hurt the small producer. In general people believe national government policies benefit the rich and have no concern for the ordinary people.

However, in general, people feel completely removed from “politics” beyond the greater village level. Some people in the late 1990s did believe that reformasi would bring about real changes and believed that parties such as Megawati’s Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) would provide representation for ordinary people. Today no one believes that the existing parties at a national, provincial or regional level will represent the interests of ordinary people. While aware of many issues of national, provincial and regional significance people feel and indeed are disenfranchised from the political process as there is no party that currently represents the interests of ordinary people and in particular the needs of rural communities.

In addition, corruption remains a significant issue not only at the national level but extend right down to the most local level. For example funding for government development programs is allocated at different levels of government. However it is usual for the funding that actually arrives at the local level to be significantly less than that allocated, sometimes as large as twenty-five per cent. Local officials and other community members remain afraid to challenge this. When asked what the potential consequence of challenging this practice may be, the answer is that the funding will be withdrawn completely.

### **Formal decision-making**

This village is one of seven smaller villages within one big village. This local village has its own elected leadership including village head (Pak Kepala Dusun), in addition to the elected village (desa) head, Pak Lurah and elected representatives from each smaller village to the greater village committees. According to local people, the biggest impact of day-to-day politics and decision-making occurs as a result of the decisions and activities at the greater village level of politics. Many administrative tasks relating to daily life activities are implemented through the local village office at the level of Kelurahan (greater village level).

Therefore the process of election of Pak Lurah and involvement in greater village politics has an impact on the local community. This research does not include an analysis of this level of community decision-making except to provide context to the analysis of decision-making structures at the most local level.

According to this community the last election of Pak Lurah was relatively clean, that is free from corruption and collusion. At the same time at the local level of Indonesian politics, nepotism, in particular in the form of loyalty to family and kinship relationships continues to have a significant impact on the decision making processes of all individuals.

That this election was considered reasonably clean is not to be underestimated. In the village closest to this in order to be merely listed as a candidate for election as Pak Lurah each candidate must pay one million rupiah up front. If candidacy is accepted a further payment must be made. The clear implication of this is that ordinary people have no chance to become a candidate for election.

It was said that the last election of the greater village head, Pak Lurah, election marked a break with the previous patterns of election of local officials. Previous

elections were usually influenced by tradition, with candidates and families of candidates having had long involvement in local politics, usually having higher levels of education and were related to social classes that had long influenced local conditions not just politically but economically. It was said that this last election marked a change in the pattern of elections with local people choosing a candidate that did not follow this tradition but instead chose a candidate seen to be more closely involved with the day-to-day lives of ordinary people, more closely aware of the life of ordinary people.

This was said not to be the result of the impact of the era of reformasi, but the outcome of a long term process of communities breaking free of the fear of rejecting those that had always held power, in one person's words, the community had become brave enough to challenge tradition.

At the smallest level of village life the election of the local village head was also said to be clean although strongly influenced by family and kinship ties. In addition, every person, man and woman, who had already reached the age of 17 years had the right to vote. This differs from the greater village elections where only family heads (men) have the right to cast a vote. This decision for all adults to have one voice one vote was decided at the local level by the general meeting.<sup>24</sup>

This village has a number of different roles and responsibilities. In addition to the village head there are two Kepala RT (elected block leaders), head of security, head of the family prosperity programme and a religious leader.

Aside from the day-to-day responsibilities of these positions there is a village general meeting that decides on issues that have specific impact or importance for the

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<sup>24</sup> In this region it is unusual for women to have the right to vote at this level of politics. It remains unknown why this decision was taken.

local community. This may be about community development issues, economic issues that have impact on a section of the community or any issue that will have consequence for some section of the community. This formal decision making group includes the heads of families (all men).

In the last two years this formal representative body of the community has discussed the possibility of collective projects, in general focussed on the question of improving the economic capacity of the community including small collective projects for those wishing to be involved in attempting something new. The initiative was motivated by a desire to bring people together to work on a project collectively.

Despite the great levels of community cooperation and social organisation, the basic economic and social unit is that of the nuclear family. Since the division of land amongst local farmers to work individually, work and social outlook towards development of, for example, the raising of family incomes is characterised by a strongly individual approach.

One of the results of this is that progress of possible collective projects has been slow. These issues are addressed more concretely in the discussion of the economic base and social organisation of the community.

Early in 2003 there was a discussion about the possibility or need for women's representation on this body, either that women who wanted to be involved could be or that there be some formal representation from PKK. There were several opinions expressed regarding this issue. There were those that expressed it was not socially appropriate for women to play a role in public affairs. Others did not outright oppose the proposal but gave reasons for why it was not practically appropriate or possible. This included their domestic duties such as childcare or that women were too tired at

night to participate. There was a minority that supported the proposal and argued that women should be involved or represented and that this could benefit community organisation. The discussion resulted in no change to the original arrangement.

Two women were asked about the question. The first answer was that they had not known that the question had in fact been discussed. This was pointed to as just one example of the lack of communication of discussions from formal meetings to the family group. These women stated that women were capable of participating, that issues of domestic responsibility could be easily resolved with simple organisation and that they believed women should be involved or at minimum represented. They did not believe that all women would wish to be involved but that a number of women would want to and be prepared to. They believed that it would benefit community organisation if they were involved as they were often the people with hands on responsibility for resolving individual and community issues.<sup>25</sup>

In recent years there has been little support for a regular women's group meeting<sup>26</sup>. The head and three other representatives who are the wives of men who hold official positions in the village enact any responsibilities of PKK. It is not clear what the reason for this is. The head of PKK manages the distribution of the national subsidy programs, such as food subsidy program, health assistance for older people who are economically disadvantaged and baby health program for children from economically disadvantaged families. She also has responsibility to report on health statistics and programs to improve health outcomes.

PKK manages a fund that in the past has been used as a loans fund. This fund is currently not used for loan purposes, as many loans over a period of years remained

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<sup>25</sup> See Chapter five for more detail regarding issues of gender

<sup>26</sup> Some of the reasons for this are addressed in chapter 5 in the discussion of women's social role.

unpaid. The fund is used to invest in the purchase of things used for community celebrations or commemorations, essentially for collective purposes.

There is a youth group that includes all those not yet married as well high school students. The youth group often deals with practical issues like clothing for formal community occasions but has the capacity to initiate and implement projects of its own. At the same time this group usually will have its decisions approved by the village general meeting or minimally the village head. This group organised a village exposure visit for foreign students in May 2003. In general it was well organised and effective however suffered from the usual teething problems of a first time-organised activity. The event did highlight some of the lack of coordination between groups and official representatives of the community in particular women in the community.

### **Informal decision-making**

From the information gathered and from the direct comments of several informants, this community faces a certain cross roads in terms of its development potential. In recent years there has been a generational transition from the group of people that largely led the process of community development in the 1970s and 1980s.

The 1970s and early 1980s saw quite dramatic changes in local conditions economically and socially. The family that historically has held both economic and political control in this community for generations played a key role in these changes. Additionally a group of local small farmers played a significant role in initiating and implementing community projects that resulted in tangible social development. Stories about this period and the respective role of different people differed however it was generally agreed that both these groups played a significant role. The

relationship between these two groups could be seen as a partnership relationship although it may not be expressed as such.

At this stage the community is experiencing many transitions, some generational, others economic or social. Therefore many decisions that should be formally taken at the general meeting level are still deferred to the older generation that no longer directly participate in community forums. While there is no formal mechanism for this process this older generation is still sought for their opinion over key community decisions. This generation also has aspirations for the community that it feels are not being taken up by the younger generation.

Since the 1970s local landowners may or may not have had official roles in the village however they have had significant influence on community decision-making. The dominant economic relationship is that of patron-client and this relationship played a significant role in influencing the direction of community decisions. It is said that Javanese culture always has reinforced the need for strong leadership roles. In large part, although not exclusively, these roles have been fulfilled by those with economic capacity. This is understandable as their accumulation of economic resources gave them greater freedom of decision-making. They also had higher levels of education and experience of life outside of their immediate community. Often decisions made by local landowners, while considering the impact of decisions on local community were not taken through community decision-making forums.

During the 1970s and 1980s the land owning family were actively involved in day-to-day community activities and development projects. For the period of the 1990s until now there has also been a generational vacuum. The children of the earlier generation of landowners have not lived in the community for continuous periods. The remaining land owner who currently manages the land on behalf of the remaining

family is already in their 70s and unable to be involved in day to day management of affairs. At the current time there is increasing demand on the younger generation of landowners to be involved in direct management of land. Some people express this as a need to unite the productive potential and capacity of the community.

One result of the division of land to individual farmers to manage has been the individualisation of all aspects of the production process. Some people feel that this is not effective and wasting valuable community potential that if united could strengthen community capacity economically and socially. While attempts have been made to encourage this united approach to develop from the existing community structures and collective decision-making, it has until now not eventuated.

Several people have mentioned the need for a collective or representative body for farmers. These discussions, largely informal, have included forming a small group at a community or village or wider regional level. The purpose could be, for example, to increase economic capacity, plan strategies to increase the bargaining power of individual farmers through a collective approach or research into the viability of alternative crops. The purpose of the collective process is to provide a concrete example of collective organisation with collectively shared benefits.

## Chapter 4

The majority of these community families are primarily dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. In addition to cultivating seasonal crops<sup>27</sup> most families own some kind of livestock, cows, goats, chickens or ducks that provide an additional and relatively stable source of income.

For farmers that work the land of the local landowners there are several kinds of contracts that can be negotiated between the landowner and the farmer who works the land. However there are two systems that are most commonly used for farmers that grow tobacco and rice. During tobacco season land is worked on the Maro system. At harvest time the crop is divided into two. The sale of tobacco is organised by the person who works the land and half of the income is given to the landowner. There is also a pre-agreed system of payment of the costs of production inputs such as fertiliser, pesticides etc. During rice season, the crop harvest is divided into three. The landowner receives Two thirds and the person who works the land receives one third.

This system of land working is often referred to in academic texts as a patron client relationship. This system introduced in this community in the 1970s was also widely implemented in much of lowland Java during the 1970s. The expansion of commercial agriculture during this period did not necessarily follow the impersonal wage labour system<sup>28</sup> but rather extended a form of economic privilege to a small number of agricultural labourers. This was implemented in an effort to control the quality of labour. Its other effect is to create a vertical dependency relationship

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<sup>27</sup> Wet season rice, dry season tobacco. Some farmers will also plant chillies as an alternative to tobacco however in general there are the two planting seasons of rice and tobacco.

<sup>28</sup> That is did not create a vast mass of landless wage workers with no ties to a specific area as occurred in the major industrial cities.

between the patron and client. They reciprocally feel some obligation towards each other. In other words it reinforces non-capitalist or feudal relations of production.<sup>29</sup>

In previous periods, harvest was usually supervised in some form by the landowners. For several years this has not occurred and many people comment that the system is often not adhered to. The landowners often will receive only a fraction of the pre agreed payment. This is widely known and some efforts have been made to resolve the issue. Until now these attempts have been unsuccessful. Many are concerned that this is wasting precious community resources and is socially divisive and has the potential to undermine the relationship of trust between landowner and small farmer for those that follow the system division of harvest honestly.

Some farmers also may rent small areas of land on a contract basis. Contracts are prepaid agreements like direct rental contracts that gives the renter full control over production and full proceeds from their harvest. All production costs are born by the renter.

### **Reciprocal cooperation**

For those dependent on agriculture, the basic unit of production in this community is the family household. At the same time at peak periods of agricultural production, for example harvest, reciprocal cooperation plays a significant role in this communities ability to successfully manage the harvest. The nature of agriculture in Indonesia is that it is extremely labour intensive. It would be almost impossible for these communities to manage peak periods of agricultural activity such as harvest without this. Most families are unable to pay for labour to assist in peak periods. This

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<sup>29</sup> Hefner, Robert. 1990. The political economy of mountain Java: an interpretative history. University of California Press, Ltd. California, United States of America. P 142

cooperation is often based on family or kinship ties, however some families have built their own reciprocal relationships outside of these ties.

Due to the small land area worked by an individual farmer, small farmers can grow only small yields each season therefore they rely on the direct sale of their produce and livestock for annual income. This makes them very dependent on current market prices for produce and therefore vulnerable to fluctuations in price.

There are three small tobacco-trading groups that operate in this community. These groups are relatively long established and operate under the name of three different heads of households. These groups purchase tobacco directly from farmers locally and in the surrounding tobacco growing regions. The tobacco is sold in baskets to one of the local tobacco warehouses that then sell the tobacco on to the cigarette factory. Once traders purchase the tobacco it is brought to the warehouse and the price negotiated.

In recent years, small farmers and small traders of tobacco have had little ability to bargain the question of price. The year 2002 was an extreme example of this. The price for classes of tobacco<sup>30</sup> that usually obtain the highest prices fell dramatically to those usually paid. This resulted in many if not a majority of farmers experiencing financial losses during that tobacco season. Small traders also lost money. Large traders did make losses, however due to economies of scale, some traders were able to store tobacco until the following season<sup>31</sup>.

Aside from farming, two family heads work for the local office of the national electricity company, one of whom gains additional income by providing motorbike

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<sup>30</sup> Classes indicate the relative quality of tobacco according to taste, colour and smell.

<sup>31</sup> As tobacco ages, in general the quality and therefore price increases. For small farmers and traders who rely on the direct sale of seasonal crops or purchased tobacco for annual incomes, they do not have the ability to store tobacco until the following season.

transport in the local community. One family head is a tailor. One family runs a small warung that sells various cooking ingredients and essential supplies.

Some heads of families and young unmarried men seek work in addition to their agricultural work for example assisting building houses, maintenance and repair work and other work that is available locally. Women are primarily engaged in agriculture and domestic responsibilities. Some young unmarried women work outside of the local village for example selling goods in the local market. Their incomes tend to be very small. Many young people attempt to seek work outside of the village however work is difficult to obtain without contacts. Some youth in this village were prepared to seek work in other parts of Indonesia and overseas during the 1980s and 1990s. Most have returned home to farming work. It is said that political instability, lack of job security and poor working conditions domestically and overseas has impacted on young people's preparedness to travel and remain outside of their home area.

There is a system of community tax collected at each respective harvest. That collected in tobacco season provides the basis for a community fund that is used to maintain community infrastructure. The rice tax is managed by PKK. All of the land that is owned in this village is farmed by people by this community therefore all taxes return to the community.

During tobacco harvest from each tobacco plant one leaf is given to the village. This accumulated tobacco is then sold and the proceeds form the basis of the locally based community fund that is used for community needs. The most urgent community need at this time is repairs to the local community meeting house. It is also used to assist families who have recently been bereaved.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> This issue is addressed under cultural aspects

During rice harvest it is collected during Bawon<sup>33</sup>. Each person that receives bawon gives one plate of rice to a collective fund. This can then be sold to raise revenue for the scheme administered under the name of PKK. One advantage of the community's land being worked only by those that live in the community is that these taxes directly return to the community.

As mentioned the majority of people in this community are farmers that work the land of the local landowners, own small areas of land themselves or work for landowners outside this village on a share in production or contract basis. During the 1970s and 1980s stable and often subsidised prices for productive inputs such as fertilisers and pesticides enabled local farmers to make a reasonable stable income from farming. The land was productive, the crops usually of good quality and the market for the product was also reasonably stable. Prices of secondary of secondary agriculture were also stable.<sup>34</sup> These factors supported the relative economic progress of this community.

In recent years these variables have become increasingly uncertain. The cost of production has become increasingly expensive. Subsidies for inputs have progressively been withdrawn, as has price regulation.

Quality of crops has remained reasonably stable; environmental factors such as water supply and soil quality have become increasingly variable. Rainfall in this region is not as plentiful. Outside of the official rain season rain is increasingly scarce and the dry season it is said is becoming longer. Anecdotal evidence suggests that

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<sup>33</sup> Share of rice harvest for labour provided during harvest season.

<sup>34</sup> Until the early period 2003 prices for livestock were stable and in general returned an almost guaranteed return. After this period the price has fallen. In the case of sale price of cows the fall in price is said to be have been the result of the import of Australian cows.

while environmental degradation has not yet become a serious issue it could indeed become more significant in the next few years.<sup>35</sup>

The most variable factor in the last few years has been the question of sale price of crops. This community has for decades been a tobacco growing area during the dry season. This started during the period of the 1800s. New settlers to the region acquired knowledge of tobacco growing and this began a tradition of tobacco growing that remains to this day. During the wet season rice is grown. In addition to providing rice for consumption, rice harvest has until recent years also provided relatively small but stable incomes.

According to local people, the stability of tobacco prices began to fluctuate in the early 1990s. Prior to this long established systems of trade had relatively guaranteed stable prices. One local person suggested that increasing monopolisation of the tobacco industry by several cigarette factories could be the main contributing factor to this change. While the last ten years have seen variations and fluctuations in the price of tobacco 2002 was the worst year for tobacco sales that people could remember.

Several factors contributed to this including the introduction of a government revenue tax on the sale of tobacco products which began has been progressively implemented since 2001; expansion of tobacco growing regions within Indonesia; regulation of health effects of tobacco products which is likely to influence consumption; Increasing monopolisation of trade in tobacco which has weakened the position of the small farmer and small trader.

The price of rice has also fallen in most recent times. Several factors could account for this. Previously stable prices of most agricultural products have fallen, often dramatically, as the result of deregulation of the agricultural sector; deregulation of

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<sup>35</sup> Kompas article

pricing of inputs and agricultural products, deregulation of agricultural imports in some sectors. Articles<sup>36</sup> regarding the condition of rice farmers in West Java for example point to an influx of cheap rice imports with which local farmers cannot compete.

Historically if farmers in this village have grown crops aside from tobacco and rice it has usually been chillies and vegetables. Vegetables have in general not achieved high prices however the returns relative to cost of production usually return some kind of income. However in the last year the price of vegetables in general has also dropped often dramatically. For many farmers it would be cheaper to let their crops rot in the field compared to harvest and transport to sale. This is often expressed, as “there is no price”<sup>37</sup>.

Chillies in particular have for long periods of time returned reasonable incomes. The start up cost of chillies is quite high compared to other crops and until recently chillies sold by farmers directly achieved reasonably high prices compared to other vegetables. In recent months chillies also have had “no price”.

All small farmers in Indonesia face a serious condition with rising costs of production and declining sale price of their crops. Prices of inputs have risen dramatically. During the 1970s and 1980s farmers had access to cheap credit schemes to purchase essential items such as fertiliser. These are no longer available. During the initial period of the green revolution small quantities of chemical inputs were required. Over time the quantities have increased. Combined with increasing prices there is mounting evidence that farmers are no longer to meet the cost of production. In addition to basic issues of economic production, domestic costs of life such as fuel,

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<sup>36</sup> rice farmers in west java

<sup>37</sup> This expression means that farmers are making a financial loss.

electricity, basic foodstuffs and education have also increased. This has been devastating for many farming communities in Indonesia. Until now this community due to small individual savings and small loans at the outset of the 2003 tobacco season have enabled people to produce tobacco this season. However if the unstable price condition continues in the longer term this will begin to impact on the already established relative economic security of this community. This could impact for example, questions of education of children and farmers ability to produce crops for sale.

## **Chapter 5**

In addition to the issues of economy and formal and informal structures of decision making this chapter will analyse other factors that influence the social organisation and development potential of this farming community including the role of women, culture and social relationships.

Limitations of time and the scope of this research led me to restrict discussion of other factors to predominantly those of culture and gender. These discussions are also less than complete but again begin to point to factors that practically influence day-to-day life. While originally intending to discuss the role of religion, religion does not manifest as a significant influencing factor in issues of community capacity development. Religion is considered to be important for all people, but is a predominantly private matter that people should not enter the realm of politics and choice of religion should also be one of free choice and respect for the religion of other.

## **Culture**

*Culture... is often understood as something inherited from our predecessors, a more or less ready-made system of symbols and ideas, learned in rituals and other cultural performances and used to understand and interpret the world.*<sup>38</sup>

This view of culture does not capture the cultural experience of a community that has experienced relatively rapid social and economic changes and that finds itself in an ever-increasing uncertain social, economic and political condition. This community ascribes to many of the traditional thoughts of Javanese culture. One of the significant morals or values of Javanese society is that of striving for social harmony. This requires empathy, avoidance of conflict, respect, politeness and humility. In order to achieve the goal of social harmony, each person must attempt to find his/her designated place within the social hierarchy. This view does strongly influence the outlook of many in this community, most strongly expressed by the older generation.

However traditional Javanese culture and social relations have been profoundly impacted by the economic and the accompanying social and political developments experienced since the 1970s. The increasing influence of capitalist social relations of production, particularly at the level of market relations and Indonesia's increasing incorporation into the global economic market have disrupted the ability of traditional social values to respond to some of the social issues that have developed during this period.

Feudal relations and ideology are still dominant in day-to-day community life and expressed most obviously through language and social interactions between predominantly different class or social groups. Class structure and power relationships

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<sup>38</sup> Hefner, Robert. 1990. *The political economy of mountain Java: an interpretative history*. University of California Press, Ltd. California, United States of America. P 239

are reflected in Javanese culture, one aspect being language. Despite changes in agricultural practice, higher levels of education, influences of improved communication via radio and television technology, long held practices and views for example relations between those who own land and those who work the land of those who own it remain intact. Those that own land are given formal respect regardless of their role, age and occupation in the community. Many people express shyness or fear at addressing or discussing directly with these members of the community. Most likely out of fear of the consequences of offending one of the family upon which they are dependent for their livelihood. This family also maintains a formal distance from the rest of the community in terms of social activity and refrains from developing more close relationships with some individuals. It has been explained that this has been done on the basis of not provoking community rivalries and jealousies. At the same time there are several families that have closer relations with the land-owning group. These are families that historically have been people with key responsibilities or positions in relation to the current landowning group's ancestors.

Today individualist, consumerist, western culture increasingly influences the ideas and aspirations of the young generation, particularly through media such as television and access to information via internet and school education about cultures and opportunities outside of their own experience. In this community many of the traditions and cultural practices of Javanese people are being lost. This is most obviously witnessed through the loss of many aspects of Javanese language and a loss of interest or respect for many of the valuable teachings in Javanese culture.

There is a general experience of community unity. Systems of reciprocal labour and cooperation remain strong in this community. While day-to-day life is relatively harmonious, periodically conflicts do emerge which divide the community along

family lines, from the oldest members to the smallest children. Some believe this to be based on historical relationship to the local landowning family but not verified by others. This may be a contributing factor. This aspect was not explored during the course of the research period.

## **Women**

As a single educated women born in Australia and living in Indonesia for the first time at the age of 32, I could not help but feel profoundly struck by the significance placed on marriage and the bearing of children in Indonesian society. The contrast of my life experience and expectations compared to women born in the same year as me in this village were enormous. One woman born in the same year as me was forced to marry at sixteen years of age and had her first child at 17 years. Today her eldest child is in his first year of senior high school.

One factor that I was constantly struck by was the gendered division of work and gendered division of social expectations. While time limited the capacity to investigate this question extensively, included in this study will be an analysis of “men’s” and “women’s” work in this community. In formulating any perspective about the capacity for development in this community, how does the gendered division of work and social expectations impact this potential?

In considering the question of the social position of women relative to the social position of men an analysis of the role of the family is essential. In rural Indonesia, family households play a central role in the organisation of economic and social life. This no doubt contributes significantly to social attitudes towards marriage, children and family obligations. Many people in this community have said that for farming communities the question of marriage and children is a practical one. People marry young so that they bear children during their most economically productive years.

In general rural men marry at older ages than women, often not until their late twenties. Many want the opportunity to experience life outside of their village before they marry. These opportunities if they involve work may also allow them to accumulate some savings for the future.

For rural women the expectation is still that women will marry young, to be married in your early twenties is considered old. Almost all women by age twenty-three have had their first child. Formally it is also said that parents have the right to decide who their children will marry, in particular young women may have little say in their choice of marriage partner. Factors such as community unity and economic advantage play a significant role in these decisions.

The Javanese culture is often invoked to explain the socially prescribed social characteristics attributed to men and women respectively. Attitudes regarding gender both reflect and reproduce complex gender relations. Women in this community express their life responsibility as being to join or follow their husbands. Many of the community discussions focus on the primary economic role of men. Men are considered to be the agricultural producers while women have the primary domestic labour responsibilities.

While this story was constantly repeated I continued to see women playing significant roles in agriculture. This observation does vary from family group to family group, however it is acknowledged that women's direct role in agricultural production has increased during the last ten years. While women's work in agriculture has increased, this has not meant that men have played an increasing role in domestic labour.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Attachment 2 presents a breakdown of basic economic and domestic responsibility of men and women respectively.

This data was collected and verified by cross-reference with several different people, men and women, with different domestic situations. There are variations from household but “on average” this is considered to be the current norm in terms of breakdown of social labour.

Some possible factors for the changes in labour were suggested by several people, however these factors could not be tested systematically. The first suggestion that I heard was that women were brave enough to take on greater roles in agricultural work. Despite the fact that women have for generations played crucial roles in the production of rice, the production of crops such as tobacco have traditionally been seen as man’s work. Around the mid 1990s, women in this village began to become more involved in other areas of agricultural work, traditionally known as men’s work.

While women’s bravery to challenge tradition is significant it is also likely that growing economic pressures were forcing women to look for opportunities to maximise family incomes and minimise expenditures that is that women were concerned about maximising economic potential. This would stem from women’s acknowledged role as family financial managers. While this is not always publicly acknowledged, much academic research has also documented this factor<sup>40</sup>.

This generation has had fewer children<sup>41</sup> therefore smaller household production units require more labour from existing members, in particular women. Most households are also unable to pay casual labour because of increasing production costs uncertain prices for agricultural produce.

One informant stated that there is not systematic discrimination of women as opposed to men. From the family group that owned land education was viewed as a

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<sup>40</sup> Berningjausen, Jutta & Kerstan, Bergit

<sup>41</sup> enforced by government birth control programs

priority for men and women. When questioned as to whether class factors played a role this was considered to not be significant as decisions about education of priority of education of male and female children were made at times prior to the accumulation of relative wealth.

However for women of poorer classes there is enormous evidence of gender discrimination and lack of formal rights of women in both the public and domestic sphere. Evidence from this community and other contemporary research indicates that impact of the ongoing economic crisis on poor communities is has primarily become the burden of women. At the same time it is usual for them to have no formal rights in their communities. Women's movement is socially monitored and restricted, in large part by cultural views of what women can and cannot do.

## **Chapter 6**

The results of the aforementioned chapters are here used to analyse the question of the capacity of analyse the different factors that do and will continue to influence the future economic, social and political development potential of this Indonesian rural community.

This community faces a period that is marked by great changes and uncertainty economically, socially and politically. The 1970s and early 1980s saw dramatic changes in local conditions economically and socially. A group of local farmers played a significant role in initiating and implementing community projects that resulted in tangible social development in the context of increasingly stable economic conditions and greater control over their means of production. The family that historically has held both economic and political control in this community for generations played a key role in these changes through providing economic resources

and supporting the initiatives of local people. The relationship between these two groups can be described as a partnership relationship. While the landowning family played a leadership role, it would have been difficult for these changes to come about with such success had it not been for the initiative and capability of the village community as a whole.

These factors coincided with a period of economic growth that was taking place throughout Asia as a result of internationally supported government programs to raise the level of, in particular, rice production to meet national food needs. It was a period of political stability enforced by the New Order dictatorship through the strict regulation of social and political activity. New Order programs ensured political control and social stability by force if necessary. Community programs initiated by the New Order government initiated social groups around issues of culture, religious worship and community and social development that acted as tools for maintaining community stability.<sup>42</sup>

In contrast, the period of the 1990s until now has been a period of change and upheaval. At a local level it has been a period of generational change, with the generation that led the community in the 1970s and 1980s handing community decision-making responsibility to the next generation.

This generation's social and political outlook and confidence is inhibited<sup>43</sup> by factors such as limited education, limited life experience and the social conservatism and socialised fear of a generation brought up during the New Order era.

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<sup>42</sup> Local landowners led these programs, for example programs of PKK or the community prosperity program.

<sup>43</sup> This refers to the families of small farmers and is not applicable to the children of the large landholders.

The long-standing client-patron relation within the local community has reinforced this social conservatism where locals often defer decisions or wait for the initiative of the patron landowner. In this generational transition the younger generation of large landowners has largely not been present in the community and the current family manager already in her 70s, lacks initiative, creativity and the ability to work in cooperation with the community, in stark contrast to the period of the 1970s and 1980s.

This community at this time lacks the capacity to fully involve all of the socially and economic members of its community. Women have no formal role in public life or formal community decision-making. The growing economic crisis in Indonesia and its impact at the local level is profoundly increasing the work burden and economic responsibility of women in this community. Despite this women have no voice or right in community decision making.

One of the factors that support this community's ability to survive economically is the system of reciprocal cooperation. This system is utilised in the economic sphere at harvest time. Reciprocal cooperation is essential to guarantee a successful harvest, as most families are unable to pay wages to people to assist.

Reciprocal cooperation is essential for the fulfilment of community activities such as celebrations of weddings and circumcisions and community obligations such as funerals. These communal activities are profoundly social and in stark contrast to the relative individualist and socially isolated experience of economic and domestic labour of individual family households. This social experience reinforces and cultural belief of the importance of community and social responsibility that in many areas of Indonesia has begun to disintegrate under the impact of the introduction of capitalist social relations of production.

Despite this system of reciprocal cooperation the outlook of small farmers remains profoundly individualist. The basic unit of production is the family household. Individual families carry out every day economic life and domestic activities. Issues of land management, instruments of production, cost of production, search for markets and sale of produce is largely carried out individually. Each household manages almost all aspects domestic responsibility individually.<sup>44</sup> The small economic base of each household has limited farmers' ability to purchase and utilise technology that could increase the productive capacity of the community.

The local focus and limited life experience of most people outside of their immediate community also limits the ability of most people to consider the potential opportunities and value of building networks and relationships with people and organisations outside of their community. For example this community has almost no contact with organisations that are active in providing valuable resources including material support or education to farmers.

All land owned in this community is worked by the people that live in it. The community has a history of shared communal development and is skilled in a range of aspects of community development needs, for example, road building and the supply of water. Therefore there is a large potential community resource available if people are prepared to take a collective decision and collective risk to share economic and social resources. One example is the purchase of appropriate technologies on a collective basis.

Outside of the immediate community, Indonesia as a whole faces a period of ongoing economic instability. Issues that are common to most small farmers in

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<sup>44</sup> The one exception to this is the role of kinship ties. Some families will assist other family members economically if they are able.

Indonesia such as rising costs of production, the monopolisation of trade of their produce by big companies, the impact of imported agricultural products on the local market, rising prices of household needs such as fuel, basic foodstuffs and education of children are significant in this community. Despite this, these challenges are still resolved by each small farming household individually.

The lack of women's ability to be active in community discussion and role in community decision making is particularly relevant to this issue as in general women who play the role of family financial managers. Without the opportunity to discuss these issues collectively they will remain individual household problems.

Many of these issues are and can be significantly influenced by national government policies. Despite this local people feel, and indeed are at this time, disenfranchised from the political process of regional, provincial and national politics. The people currently acting as formal decision makers at the most local level are a generation of people that grew up during a political period where the right to hold political views or ideas different to that of government was not allowed.

It is extremely common to hear the comment <sup>45</sup> that life was better during the Suharto era. This is sometimes expressed in terms of Indonesia not needing political parties who are all corrupt, but a strong leadership that could possibly come from non-political organisations such as the military.

The crisis of small farmers in this community is not a local experience. The majority of Indonesia's small farmer communities face the same issues. In agricultural sectors that have been hardest hit by economic crisis as a result of government policies, farmers have begun to protest. As the social and economic crisis for these

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<sup>45</sup> This comment is common not only in this community but in many of Indonesia's poor rural and urban communities.

communities intensifies and spreads it is likely that social protest will also increase. The government has not responded to their issues. It is unlikely that a return to military rule in Indonesia would allow farmers to express their opposition to government policy through demonstrations of collective public protest.

The future of this community will be influenced by many and variable factors. The community has social and economic “capital” in the form of land, labour collective skills and a long-term experience of collective community organisation. At a local level, this community may benefit from a collective discussion of social and economic issues and concrete proposals for community development. Some attempts have been made by the younger generation of the local landowning family but due to their lack of ability to live in the community until recently, as well as a lack of a group of small farmers ready and willing to respond to new initiatives, until now this has not come to fruition.

The community may benefit from greater exposure to outside experiences, either through opportunities to visit and directly learn from other rural community experiences, or through the invitation of organisations and individuals that can understand and respond concretely and sensitively to the needs of the community.

The impact of the national political climate and the disenfranchisement of people from politics is a more difficult issue to overcome. Community education that could assist people’s ability to understand the causes of the current political and economic crisis may be an important tool in assisting this community to consider how to increase their social and political influence at this level of politics.

The issue of women’s social position can play a significant role in this period. If this community is able to face the challenge of integrating all of its economically and

socially active members it faces a greater chance of responding to the issues that it faces.

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