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Participatory management in a family-run traditional music enterprise: the case of rumah sasando

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Article Info

Article history:

Received Jun 11th, 2026

Revised Aug 14th, 2026

Accepted Sept 28th, 2026

Keyword:

Participatory management,
Traditional performing arts,
Community-based cultural
heritage,
Cultural sustainability,
Family-based governance

ABSTRACT

Traditional art and cultural groups across Indonesia face three simultaneous pressures—modernization, the younger generation's reluctance to continue the work, and shifting market conditions—that together erode intergenerational transmission, while most such groups still lack formal organizational structures. This study examines Rumah Sasando Oebelo, a family-run traditional music group in Kupang Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, to answer two questions: (1) how participatory management, in which all members jointly participate in decision-making, is implemented in practice, and (2) how this collective, deliberative model relates to the group's dual goals of cultural preservation and economic sustainability. The study uses a qualitative case study design (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018), drawing on in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document review with four purposively (criterion-based) selected informants directly involved in community management. Data were analyzed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldana's (2014) condensation-display-verification model together with thematic analysis, and trustworthiness was supported through source and method triangulation. Findings show that (1) participatory management is advanced almost entirely through internal family deliberation with no reliance on formal management systems; (2) the group operates a voluntary, non-fixed-fee donation model consistent with the gotong-royong principle; and (3) partnerships with government, academic, and civil-society actors have strengthened production and marketing capacity without displacing the family's core decision-making authority. The study contributes an empirical account of participatory governance in an informal, kinship-based cultural enterprise, extends participatory-governance theory to this underexplored context, and offers a replicable model for other family-run traditional art groups seeking to balance cultural preservation with economic viability.



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Introduction

For the traditional performing arts across Southeast Asia, there is an unsolvable survival dilemma that has long been documented by countless studies. This dilemma did not emerge out of thin air: three ongoing changes have gradually eroded the very foundation that these art forms rely on to persist. For thousands of years, these performing arts had survived through the intergenerational transmission from grandparents to parents, and from parents to grandchildren, yet this smooth transmission logic that passed skills from older

to younger generations can no longer hold up today (UNESCO, 2003). For the purposes of this study, this erosion is operationalized using the three-dimensional cultural-sustainability framework introduced later in this paper—continuity of practice, adaptive capacity, and economic viability (see Cultural Sustainability, below; cf. Hurtado, 2017; Richards, 2018)—rather than treated as an undefined, purely descriptive claim. The three changes that have rendered this old logic obsolete are as follows: first, the overall trend of societal modernization has altered the lifestyle that once centered around traditional performances; second, a growing number of people have left the ancestral lands where their families had lived for generations, dispersing communities that were once tightly clustered; third, people's cultural consumption preferences, meaning the types of performances they enjoy watching and listening to, have changed, leading to fewer and fewer young people willing to dedicate time to engaging with traditional performances. As the old transmission path proves unworkable, a growing number of people have proposed that local communities should take charge of managing these art forms, which may be able to reverse the precarious situation. The core idea of these proponents of community-led management is simple: if a traditional craft is sustained and preserved by the local community that values it from the bottom of their hearts, its vitality will far outstrip that of art forms that only rely on official, top-down institutional support (Cornwall, 2008; Richards, 2018). Theoretically, this expectation follows from commons-management reasoning: actors who directly hold and depend on a cultural practice have a standing incentive to sustain it that purely top-down or family-only transmission does not guarantee on its own (cf. Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). Recent empirical work supports this: family-firm succession is repeatedly shown to disrupt continuity when the next generation disengages (Baltazar et al., 2023), kinship-based governance can substitute for formal structures in sustaining community enterprises (Zhou & Xu, 2024), and community-held intangible practices remain vulnerable to exactly this kind of intergenerational transmission failure (Gwervevande & Mthombeni, 2023). After all, only the people who live in the local area every day and treat these performances as an integral part of their own lives can figure out how to integrate these art forms into contemporary daily life a feat that official projects sustained by short-term funding can never match. However, when it comes to putting this approach into practice, it becomes clear that there is a severe lack of tangible empirical evidence to demonstrate how the community-led management model actually operates on a daily basis. It is not that no one advocates for this model in theory, but that there is far too little fieldwork data that documents, through on-the-ground community immersion, when these communities schedule rehearsals, how they raise funds, and how they attract young people to learn the traditional arts. Especially for small, geographically remote communities, such field records are almost non-existent, and the body of relevant research remains extremely thin.

In academic literature that studies arts institutions, there has always been an intractable, long-standing paradox. These studies focused on arts organizations repeatedly grapple with the same unresolved contradiction: whenever researchers discuss operational models of public engagement, whether they are conducting theoretical analyses or evaluating practical outcomes, they all take for granted that a basic formal framework must first be assembled to implement such engagement models. That framework includes boards of directors, written charters, and dedicated decision-making groups. Only by relying on these established formal structures can researchers measure and tally the actual conditions of public participation—and this default research premise was first put forward by Fung as early as 2006. However, the operational logic of some communities is completely different. They do not rely on the formal frameworks that are universally assumed to be necessary. Instead, they organize public participation in activities and collective deliberations on matters of common concern through the kinship ties between acquaintances, and the informal discussions that take place when people gather privately in casual settings. For these non-traditional communities, the standard governance analysis tools commonly used in academia are completely unsuitable for conducting research. Precisely because the barriers to researching these cases are too high and the existing tools lack sufficient adaptability, the number of such cases that end up being included in case study literature on arts management is extremely small.

There is a scarcity of existing literature dedicated to Indonesia's traditional art communities. This gap persists even though craft-based community development more broadly has drawn recent scholarly attention (Jones et al., 2021). This limited body of research not only reveals that this field is well worth in-depth exploration, but also clearly exposes many unaddressed cognitive gaps. Two analyses focus on two distinct traditional art institutions. One is the study conducted by Nainggolan (2014), which centers on an opera troupe in North Sumatran, with its core focus being the troupe's leadership model; the other is Puspitasari (2025)'s study, which examines a century-old classical dance institution in Yogyakarta. Both studies record the same characteristic: the governance methods of these two institutions either involve all members participating in decision-making, or a subset of core members jointly engaging in decision-making, rather than one person wielding unilateral authority. Furthermore, neither of these institutions relies on a single

family to sustain their operations; even without a single bloodline controlling resources, they are still able to maintain long-term functioning and pass down their cultural traditions continuously. Other studies shift their focus away from fixed troupes and institutions to examine the organization of festivals related to traditional arts. For example, the Bali's Davedan Show studied by Ruastiti (2018) adopted an on-site collaborative participation model during its organization. This type of research investigates the collaborative planning among researchers, performing artists, and professional production teams; the participation it studies is not the model of collective discussion limited to the small circle of kinship families. Across all the research cases mentioned above, none has directly examined a community where all matters related to operation and management from the refinement and production of works, the on-site organization of performances, to ticket pricing, external promotion to attract audiences, and liaison and coordination with various external entities are fully coordinated and comprehensively managed solely through collective discussion within the family.

The gap this current study aims to fill is exactly this untouched blank spot in the field. All previous articles discussing participatory management in traditional performing arts have taken a premise for granted—that any team practicing this type of traditional performance, no matter how small its scale or how loose its operations, must at least have a most basic organizational framework: that is, the fundamental structures of rules covering who is in charge of coordination, who liaises with resource providers, and how rehearsals and performances are scheduled. But what if even this most basic framework does not exist? Under such circumstances, how can participatory management, which relies on collective discussion, operate at all? If even that minimal framework is absent, and the entire team functions solely sustained by kinship ties among relatives, what kind of mutual influence would this management model—one that relies not on written rules but entirely on personal connections—exert on the cultural heritage support funds allocated by external parties? None of the previous studies have ever provided any actionable guidance, nor have they been able to clarify the operational logic of this extreme scenario.

The Rumah Sasando Oebelo community, located in the village of Oebelo, Kupang Tengah, Kupang Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, serves precisely as a case to discuss the issue before us. The founder of this community is Jeremias A. Pah, a master skilled in the sasando instrument. From the day the founder moved to the village of Oebelo in 1985, this community has simultaneously undertaken three functions: first, a production workshop for making sasando instruments; second, a venue capable of hosting related performances; and third, an informal training center that teaches newcomers to play the instrument. The training here is not an official institution with formal qualifications and a complete set of teaching systems; it is merely a folk place for master craftsmen to pass on their skills to apprentices. However, among the currently available basic materials, there is an unavoidable time contradiction: one source states that the founder only moved to the village in 1985, while another records that the workshop's building was completed as early as 1978. This timeline, where the building existed before the founder moved in, does not align, and this discrepancy can only be sorted out by cross-referencing first-hand original records. Following Jeremias Pah's passing in January 2019, the management of the community was handed over to his sons, who collectively run it, with day-to-day operations primarily overseen by Djitron Pah and Ivan Pah. Since the handover, this community has still not established any formal management structure, and has maintained its original mode of operation.

This study pursues three objectives. First, it clarifies the specific form and operational logic of the community's co-management system; put plainly, it sorts out exactly how community members gather to participate in management, and how this model operates step by step. Second, it sorts out the participation modes of members throughout the full process of planning, implementation, and evaluation; that is, it organizes the common patterns underlying members' participation behaviors, identifying the specific ways community members engage at every stage from the initial project planning phase, to the mid-phase implementation and advancement, to the final retrospective review and assessment. Third, it analyzes which factors boost and which factors hinder this model's ability to sustain the vitality of Sasando performing arts; that is, it breaks down exactly what conditions enable this community co-management model to effectively support the continuous inheritance and development of Sasando as a performing art, and what conditions hold the model back, preventing it from fulfilling its intended role. From a theoretical perspective, this study presents a solid empirical case that demonstrates the co-governance model can operate normally even without the support of a formal organizational structure, adding a real-world case record to theoretical research in related fields. In practical application, this study presents cultural policy makers with a detailed scenario-clarifying how external supports including government promotion, university partnerships, and donations from civil society organizations can intervene to truly assist the community, without interfering with the community's internal independent decision-making. It provides practitioners responsible for

formulating cultural policies with a context-specific reference, helping them understand how to implement such external supports to avoid overstepping their bounds and usurping the community's right to self-determination, while effectively adding momentum to the community's development.

This study centers on the Rumah Sasando Oebelo community dedicated to protecting traditional performing arts, and proposes three core research questions: What specific form does the participatory management adopted by this community take when it manages the local traditional Sasando performing art? How does this management mechanism that enables everyone to participate actually operate? For all activities organized by the community, there are three consecutive processes: first planning what to do, then implementing the planned content, and finally reviewing the completion of the activity. In this entire process, what mode do community members use to participate? And what is the depth of their participation? For the aforementioned participatory management model, what factors support its smooth operation, and what factors hinder its development? What impacts will these supporting or hindering conditions ultimately have on the long-term inheritance of the Sasando performing art?

This study documents a special case. In the past, the implementation of a management model requiring full participation from all members mostly relied on formal organizational processes and written systems to be executed, but this case was different. All links of co-management were advanced entirely through discussions held among people with kinship ties, and no formal organizational mechanisms were used at any point. Before this study, in the existing literature on art institutions, almost no scholars had specifically discussed this type of scenario. This study extends the relevant theories of participation into this rarely touched field. It also puts forward specific expansions along three dimensions: First, at the theoretical level, the original co-governance framework was extended in this study to cover informal, family-operated cultural enterprises, filling a gap in the scope of application of this set of theories. Second, at the methodological level, many case study studies rely on written governance records to sort out the context of a case. But what if the research subject never left such written materials? This study provides a complete demonstration of this: even without any written governance records, a qualitative case study using triangulation can still be completed. Third, at the practical level, this study proposes a replicable and transferable cultural heritage management model this model receives external support while retaining full internal autonomy, and it is not only applicable to the community studied in this research, but also suitable for other communities with similar circumstances.

Participatory Management

When it comes to participatory management, this concept did not first originate in the field of culture and the arts. It first emerged in research literature related to community development and rural assessment, with corresponding research citations (Chambers, 1994; Pretty, 1995), before being extended by scholars to the field of culture and the arts, with relevant research citations (Cornwall, 2008; Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). In simple terms, it refers to a brand-new decision-making model, which is different from the past model where a small number of people made the final decisions while others passively accepted the outcomes any person affected by a project is not merely a passive recipient waiting to receive project resources and accept the project's results, but a collaborator who can participate throughout the entire process and co-design the project with the initiating party. If this model is applied to art institutions, people's inherent understanding of what "management" is will be completely restructured. Management is no longer a task only entrusted to a designated administrative leader to handle with full authority, but a collective activity completed jointly by artists, audiences, and community members, with relevant research citations (Kuppuswamy & Narayan, 2010; Mansuri & Rao, 2013).

Participatory Governance

The Ladder of Citizen Participation, put forward by Arnstein (Arnstein's 1969) in 1969, divides the degree of citizens' participation in public affairs into three essentially distinct tiers. The first tier is no participation at all; the second is symbolic participation that merely goes through the motions; the third is citizen power, where citizens truly hold the right to speak. This framework can be used for a very practical purpose: when a community claims that it has realized resident participation, people can apply this classification to assess whether the community has truly handed over decision-making power to residents, or only goes through the formalities of soliciting opinions, while retaining all actual decision-making power for itself. The varieties-of-governance framework, proposed by Fung (Fung's 2006) in 2006, built on Arnstein's analytical structure by adding three dimensions for disaggregated analysis. The first dimension is which individuals are able to participate in the matter; the second dimension is how participants communicate with one another during the participation process, and how the final decision is determined; the third dimension is the degree of influence that the opinions put forward by participants can exert on the final outcome. When these three

supplementary dimensions are used together to analyze informal consultative practices that lack fixed procedures, far more detailed and accurate judgments can be reached than by using only Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation.

Community-Based Cultural Heritage

In the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage promulgated by UNESCO in 2003, states or relevant authorities are not positioned as the core subject of cultural heritage transmission; instead, ordinary communities that live within the culture are placed in this role. In other words, to pass cultural heritage down from generation to generation, the primary actors are not states, nor specialized agencies responsible for cultural heritage, but the group of ordinary people who live with this culture day in and day out longtime neighbors in the same community, fellow villagers of the same ethnic group—they are the core that shoulders the work of transmission. The convention also directly ties the long-term preservation of cultural heritage to the autonomous control of communities and the intergenerational transfer of knowledge passed down from one generation to the next. Whether a cultural heritage can be preserved and passed down sustainably has one sole core criterion: whether this group of ordinary people can autonomously make decisions about their cultural practices, and smoothly transfer all knowledge related to that culture from the older generation to the younger generation, without interruption. These two factors are inextricably linked and cannot be separated. With this positioning, family-based transmission is no longer seen as a makeshift alternative that is inferior to management by formal institutions; instead, it has become one of the core safeguarding approaches that is recognized by the convention and valid in its own right. Many people previously believed that the crafts and rules passed down by elder family members could not compare to the reliable, formal organization and teaching provided by specialized cultural institutions, and that family transmission was merely a backup option used when formal management was unfeasible. But this convention directly corrects this misconception the model of intergenerational transmission through the family is itself a primary method recognized by the convention to safeguard cultural heritage, and is by no means a second-best choice. The citation information UNESCO's (2003) is also fully retained in the corresponding facts of this content, with its correspondence to the original paragraph remaining entirely unchanged.

Cultural Sustainability

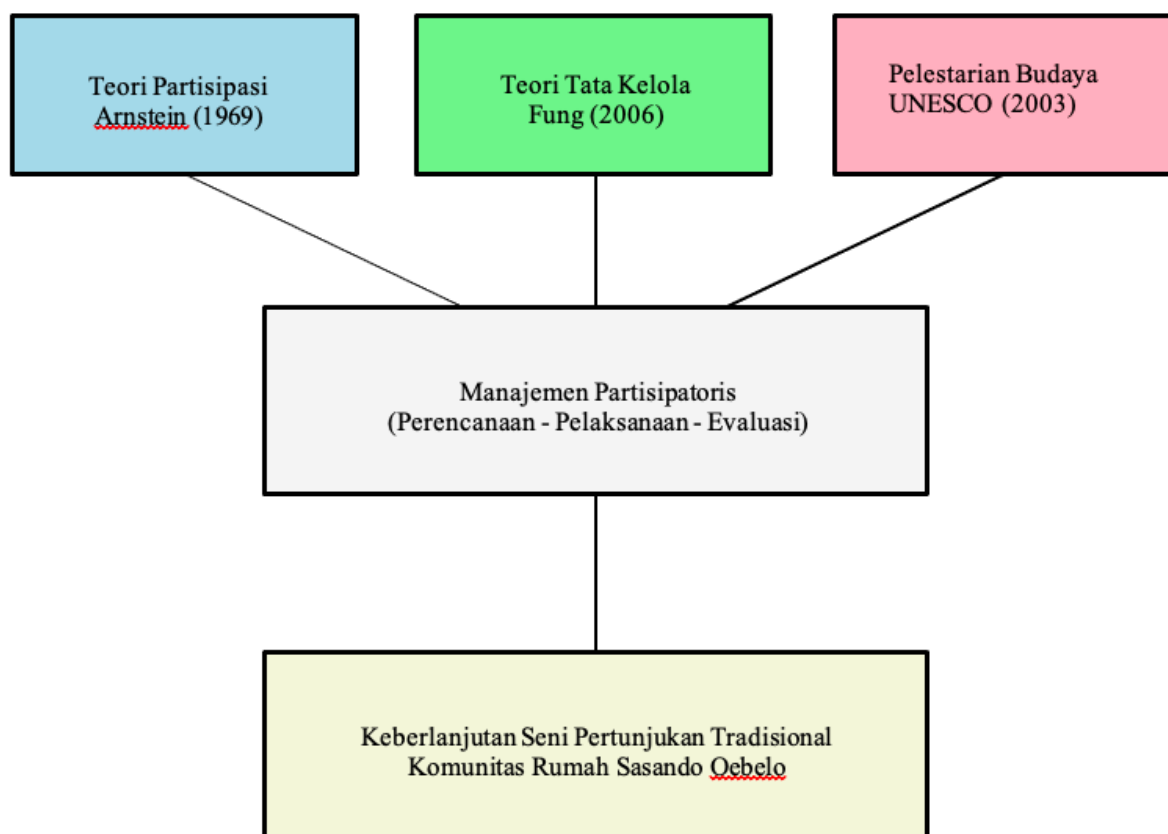
The cultural sustainability mentioned in these previous studies is not a general, vague concept, but has specific implementation criteria, and includes at least three core dimensions that are interconnected and influence one another. The first is the continuity of cultural practices, which means there must always be new people willing to take over, carry forward the work of this culture, and prevent its discontinuation when the older generation can no longer practice it; put plainly, there must be a constant stream of new practitioners to replenish the cohort. The second is the capacity for adaptation and adjustment: it must be able to pursue new innovations alongside the changes of the times, but while making changes, it must not lose the most core, instantly recognizable characteristics of the culture, and after modifications, it must still be possible for people to recognize its original form. The third is economic viability: having people to practice the culture and the ability to adapt is not enough. Engaging in work related to this culture must be able to support all practitioners who rely on it for their livelihoods, so that they do not need to worry about their basic needs, and can thus continue to carry out this work. (Hurtado, 2017; Richards, 2018). If any one of these three dimensions encounters problems and fails, the continued existence of the entire culture will be affected. For example, the most common issue is that no one is willing to take over the inheritance, meaning the dimension of continuity first weakens. Existing literature notes that when this situation occurs, the remaining two functional dimensions can, at least in the short term, partially compensate for the gap created by the failed dimension, temporarily sustaining the culture's survival. This study, meanwhile, has the ideal conditions to test whether this claim is accurate. The results section of the study records two key changes that meet the conditions for this verification: first, the completion of the improved innovation of the electric-sasando, and second, the shift of the sales focus to the international market.

Conceptual Framework

This study establishes a complete, interlinked chain of impact, where values transmit sequentially from the most fundamental local values to the final cultural development outcomes. The first links are three core local values: kinship obligation, gotong royong, and spiritual framing of service. All three values collectively lead to participatory management under this model, decisions are not made by a small group of people; instead, all decisions related to production, performance, pricing, and marketing are discussed and finalized together by the entire family. This family-wide deliberative management model further shapes the community's cultural governance model, which is the established framework for the community to engage with external partners and define the boundaries of their interactions. Ultimately, this cultural governance model drives the sustainable development of culture, which materializes into three tangible outcomes: culture can be

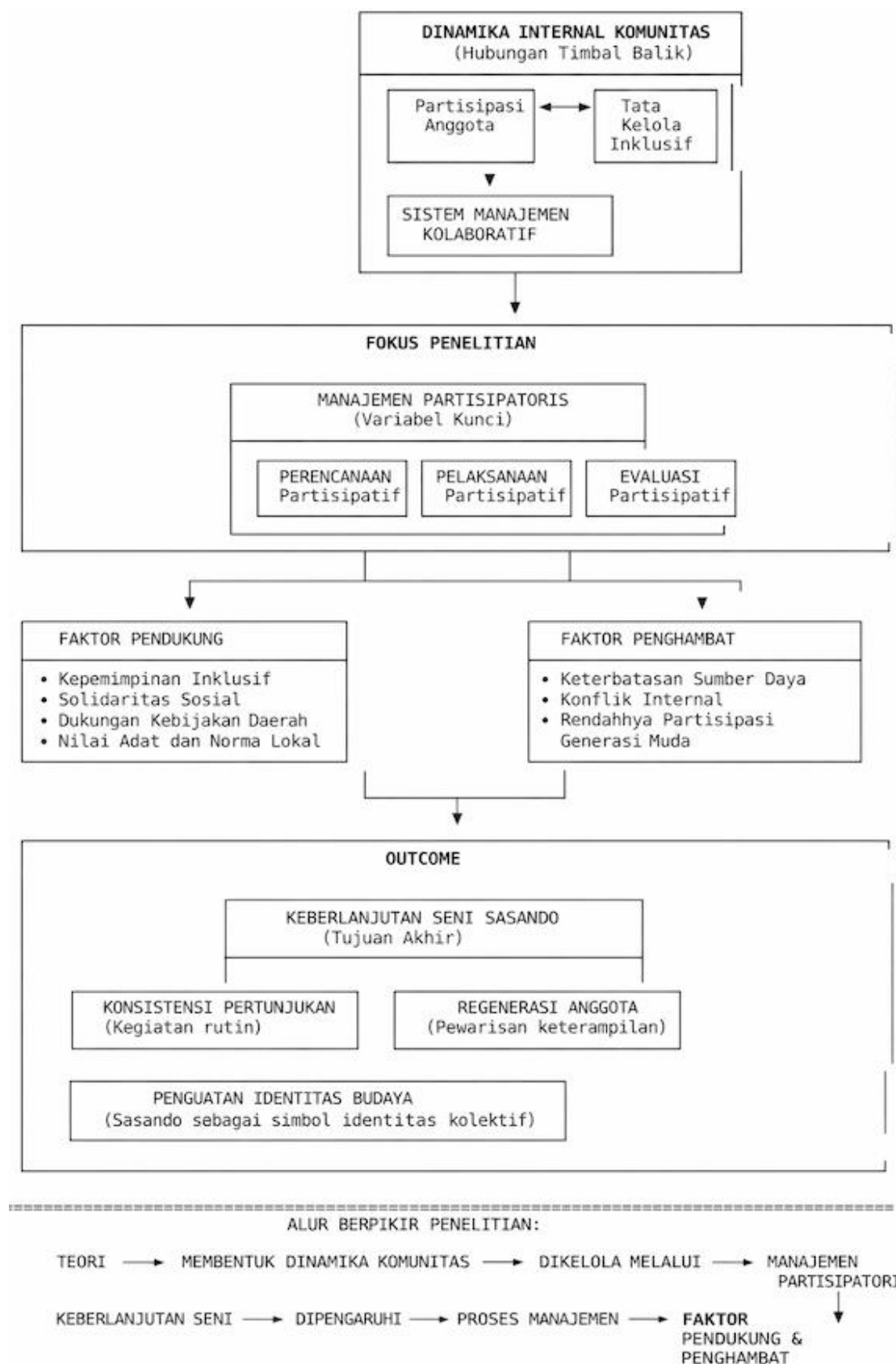
passed down smoothly, the community's cultural identity is preserved, and local residents can sustain their livelihoods through this cultural industry. Figure 1 presents the theoretical framework of this study, which connects Arnstein's (1969) participation theory, Fung's (2006) participatory governance theory, UNESCO's (2003) concept of cultural heritage protection, and the participatory management and sustainable development of the Sasando performing arts, stringing together the existing theories that underpin this study's logic and the study's core objects into a complete logical line. Figure 2 further expands the theoretical framework in Figure 1 to lay out the study's own complete conceptual framework, clearly illustrating how member participation and inclusive governance coordinate to gradually form a workable collaborative management system. This collaborative management system is the foundation of the study's core research variable: participatory management. The study carries out a specific analysis of participatory management across three stages: planning, implementation, and assessment, while also sorting out various details mentioned in the findings section, including all factors that support or hinder participatory management, as well as all outcomes that participatory management ultimately delivers.

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework



Note. This diagram synthesizes the three theoretical foundations of the study - Arnstein's (1969) participation theory, Fung's (2006) participatory-governance theory, and UNESCO's (2003) cultural heritage safeguarding concept - converging on participatory management (planning, implementation, evaluation) as the mechanism sustaining the traditional performing arts of the Rumah Sasando Oebelo community.

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework



Note. This framework depicts the reciprocal relationship between member participation and inclusive governance, which together form a collaborative management system. This system underlies the study's key variable, participatory management, analyzed through three stages (participatory planning, implementation, and evaluation) and shaped by supporting factors (inclusive leadership, social solidarity, local-policy support, and local

customary values) and inhibiting factors (limited resources, internal conflict, and low participation among the younger generation), leading to the outcome of Sasando performing-arts sustainability (consistent performances, member regeneration, and strengthened cultural identity).

Method

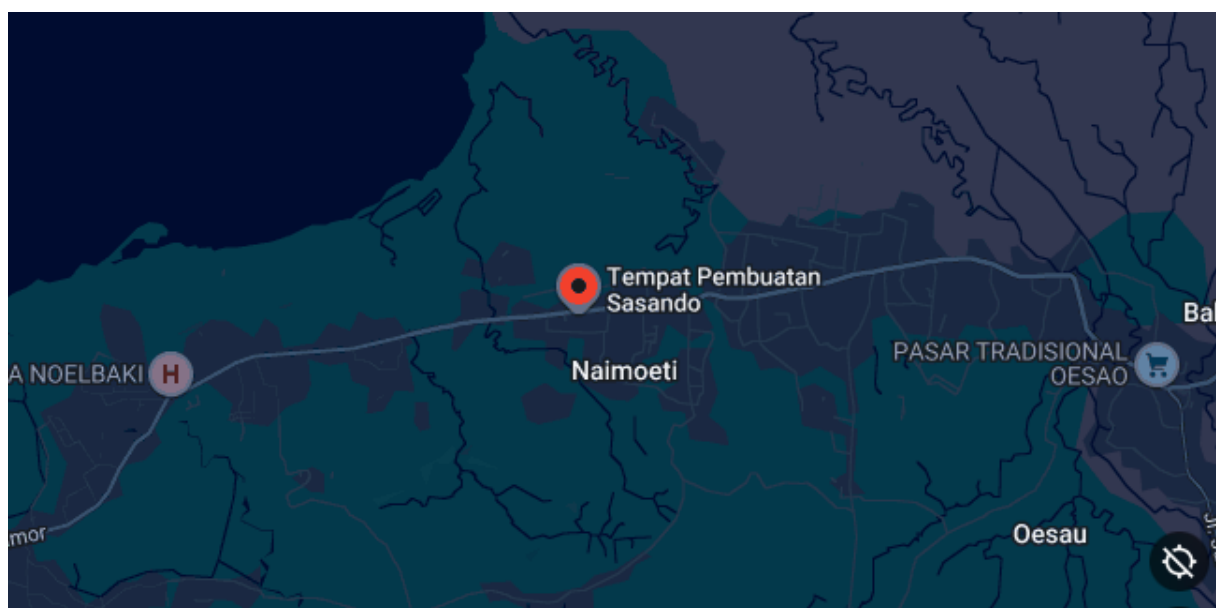
Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative case study design, the methodology of which draws on two 2018 research outputs, namely (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). This design was selected because it allows an in-depth, context-embedded analysis of a single, still-ongoing organizational phenomenon rather than a statistical generalization across many cases. The reason we chose this research design is that it perfectly matches the research needs of this study. The specific type of organizational phenomenon we aim to study must be an ongoing phenomenon that is closely tied to its specific context. The specific research subject of this study is participatory governance in real community settings-the entire study will be conducted in the real community where this phenomenon actually occurs, and will not be placed in any artificially simulated environment.

Research Setting

The Rumah Sasando Oebelo community, Oebelo village, Kupang Tengah subdistrict, Kupang Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, approximately 22–25 km from Kupang city.

Figure 3. Research Location - Rumah Sasando Oebelo, Kupang Regency



Note. The workshop is located in Naimoeti, Oebelo village, Kupang Tengah subdistrict, Kupang Regency, East Nusa Tenggara - administrative code 53.01.08.2010, postal code 85361 - along the main road connecting to Kupang city, in an area locally known for salt farming.

Participants and Data Sources

This study interviewed a total of four participants, who were not arbitrarily recruited but purposefully selected, with the core selection criterion that all of them had directly participated in the management work of the Rumah Sasando Oebelo community. This reflects a criterion-based purposive sampling strategy: every individual meeting the criterion of direct, ongoing involvement in the community's management was eligible for inclusion. Because the population meeting this criterion is itself very small, the four informants represent a near-census of that population rather than a sub-sample selected to reach thematic saturation. This approach follows established guidance on criterion-based purposive sampling in small, bounded populations (cf. Palinkas et al., 2015). The specific identities of the four participants are as follows: Djitron Pah, who has just taken up the community leadership position; Ivan Pah, who is responsible for production management; and two participants referred to only by code names to protect their privacy YL, an active community member, and RY, a young member who participated in the community's revival work. Another core criterion that finalized the selection of these four participants for interviews was that all of them had personally participated in the entire process of the community's traditional performing arts activities: from the overall planning before the event launch, to the on-site implementation during the event, to the post-event outcome

review, they were involved in every step. In addition, there was a special arrangement in the selection of participants' identities: among the four participants, only YL and RY are not members of the Pah family. This arrangement ensures that the perspectives recorded in the study are not limited to the community's core leadership, can cover more diverse voices, and avoids the recorded content only coming from the single perspective of the core management family. In addition to the first-hand information obtained from face-to-face interviews with these four participants, the study also used various types of secondary sources to supplement and corroborate the findings. These secondary sources first include various documents retained within the community, specifically organizational information recording the community's operating rules, event schedules that arrange the year's affairs, and photo and video archives that preserve traces of past events. Beyond the community's own internal materials, there are two other categories of secondary sources used in the study: one is policy documents related to cultural protection issued by the local government, and the other is published professional research literature in the academic field.

Data Collection

For this study, a total of three types of methods were used to collect data. The first type is semi-structured in-depth interviews, meaning the questions used to converse with interviewees are not completely fixed, and are adjusted flexibly according to the content of the conversation to dig deeper into the information that needs to be understood. The second type is participatory observation: the research team personally immersed themselves in local production activities, public performances, and internal community meetings, participated alongside local members while recording the observed situations, and this type of observation covered all three scenarios mentioned above. The third type is sorting through various existing documents related to the project, and organizing the required information from past materials. The entire field research work was completed between May and June 2026. During this period, the research team traveled to the research site a total of four times, and all interviews were conducted face-to-face with interviewees; no non-face-to-face methods such as online or telephone interviews were used. Before each interview officially started, the research team did not directly take out questions to ask. Instead, they first verbally explained to the interviewee exactly what this study intended to accomplish, and only started the interview after the interviewee verbally stated their consent to participate. In addition to communicating this content in advance, when the research team went out to conduct research, they always carried a letter of introduction issued by their affiliated institution. This letter was used to prove the legitimacy of their identity, so as to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings with interviewees. This study did not require interviewees to sign a paper informed consent form; instead, it followed another compliance process: all procedures for entering the research site to conduct the study were completed in accordance with regulations, through the institutional access agreement issued by the project responsible for this research. This study has obtained ethical review approval from IAKN Kupang, with the corresponding approval Letter No. 2422/IKN.01/05/2026. All interviewees have verbally confirmed that their real names can be used publicly in the final published work of this study, and no anonymization is required.

Data Analysis

For the data analysis of this study, we adopt the three-stage interactive analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldãna's (2014). The three core analytical links in this model are data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Unlike the practice adopted in many studies where unified data analysis is only launched after all data are collected, this set of analytical procedures is not activated until the final stage. Instead, it is interwoven throughout the entire data collection process starting from the first day of data collection. A round of analysis is promoted synchronously each time a batch of data is collected, and the three links keep operating continuously, without waiting for all data to be available before conducting centralized processing. In addition to this always-embedded interactive analysis model, the study also incorporates thematic analysis to sort out all core contents (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to be presented in the results section. The specific sorted contents include participation forms, the role of local values, external cooperation, marketing strategies, and integrated model analysis. All these sorted core contents will be presented one by one in the results chapter of the study.

Let's first use a specific example to explain exactly how the coding work in research is carried out—you can simply understand coding as the process of classifying and tagging research materials. In the example we will discuss, we used an excerpt from an interview, in which the interviewee Djitron Pah talked about the pricing rules for the sasando instrument. He stated that the selling price of a sasando is not decided by a single individual unilaterally; it must be determined through collective discussion among all relevant people. When discussing the price, three clear criteria are referenced: the first is the production cost required to make the instrument, the second is the quality of the materials used to build the instrument, and the third is that pricing must be set in accordance with different market segmentation conditions. After sorting out this interview

content, we assigned it two coding tags: the first is the Indonesian phrase "musyawarah harga", which translates to price negotiation, and the second is "keputusan kolektif", which means collective decision-making. After attaching these two specific small tags, we did not leave them isolated; instead, we categorized both tags into a broader theme, which is "participation in decision-making". Finally, Table 1 in the article presents a simplified excerpt from the final codebook after all tags were organized, rather than the complete full set of coding content.

Table 1. Example Coding Scheme

Code	Theme
Musyawarah harga (price deliberation)	Participation in decision-making
Pertunjukan sukarela (voluntary performance)	Participation in performance
Regenerasi keluarga (family regeneration)	Skill transmission
Inovasi Sasando elektrik (electric sasando innovation)	Product innovation
Pemasaran digital (digital marketing)	Participatory marketing strategy
Kemandirian ekonomi (economic self-reliance)	Local values in management
Kolaborasi eksternal (external collaboration)	Stakeholder partnership

Trustworthiness

When organizing the qualitative dataset for this study, two types of triangulation were applied. The first is source triangulation, which involves cross-checking data collected from three distinct channels: information gathered from interviews, content documented through field observations, and materials retrieved from various public archived documents. The second is method triangulation, which cross-references all data collected through different collection techniques, effectively cross-validating information gathered through distinct methods to avoid biases introduced by reliance on a single method. These are all the supplementary methodological work implemented in this study. Beyond these, the author team of this study formally confirms that several common practices in academic research were not conducted in this study. The first unimplemented practice is member checking. Originally a standard step in academic research to verify the accuracy of analysis, member checking requires returning the study's derived analyses and interpretations to the original interviewees who provided information for the study for reconfirmation, to ensure that researchers did not misinterpret the interviewees' original intentions. This study did not carry out this step. The second unimplemented practice relates to the use of collected community materials. These accumulated community materials, including archives, photos, videos, and other content, were only used as raw research data to support this study, and were not utilized as audit trail records for the analytical process that is, these materials were not used to step-by-step verify and document whether errors occurred throughout the entire analytical process, but were only treated as the objects of analysis for the study themselves. The third unimplemented work is the creation of a reflexivity memo. Originally, a reflexivity memo is meant to document two core elements: first, the exact nature of the relationship between the researchers conducting the study and the community involved in the study, and whether this relationship, whether due to familiarity or unfamiliarity, might skew judgments; second, the various biases that may emerge throughout the entire research process, with these potential issues documented to clarify the research team's thinking. This study did not produce this document. In addition, coding was carried out by the author team without a second, independent coder, so formal inter-coder reliability statistics (e.g., Cohen's kappa) were not computed, and thematic saturation was not formally tested; both are acknowledged here as limitations of the analytical procedure rather than presented as validated strengths. All these unimplemented steps have been truthfully included in the methodological limitations of this study's analytical design, and were not framed as deliberately chosen methodological strengths.

Results and Discussions

The findings below are organized around five cross-cutting themes identified through the condensation-display-verification analysis described in Method (see Table 3): collective decision-making, production participation, the voluntary donation system, external collaboration, and regeneration. Historical and contextual background is presented first to orient the reader; the thematic findings that follow synthesize evidence across all four informants and the secondary documentary sources, with each theme linked directly to the theoretical framework (Arnstein, 1969; Fung, 2006) rather than deferred entirely to a separate discussion.

The Organizational Context of Rumah Sasando Oebelo

The founder of Rumah Sasando Oebelo is master of the Sasando instrument, Jeremias A. Pah. First, let me make this clear: the Sasando is a traditional stringed instrument deeply tied to Rote Island and its surrounding communities. Jeremias specifically built a dedicated workshop in the village of Oebelo, where he taught visitors how to craft and play the instrument, while also mass-producing these instruments himself, rooting both the inheritance of the tradition and his livelihood in this village. Today, the place is managed by Jeremias's son, Djitron Pah. He recalls that his father first moved to the village of Oebelo in the 1960s to set up all the foundational work related to the Sasando, though no one in the family can now remember the exact year, month, or day they moved. More than a decade later, in 1978, the formal workshop premises were completed in that same village. The original author team marked this year as the official milestone for the establishment of the Sasando-focused community, taking it as the starting point when the place truly put down stable roots. Following Jeremias Pah's passing in January 2019, management of the site was logically handed over to his sons, with daily operations primarily led by the two brothers Djitron Pah and Ivan Pah. When the management was transferred, no written management rules were added, no board of directors was established, and no formal staff positions were defined. All operations continued to rely on the unspoken understanding of the whole family, unchanged from how things were when their father was alive. The entire site is divided into several sections with different functions: first, a main production workshop measuring approximately 12×20 square meters, which serves as the core space for crafting the instruments; next, a dedicated exhibition area that displays Sasando instruments of all specifications, from palm-sized miniature commemorative models to multi-stringed performance models usable by professional musicians; in addition, there is an affiliated textile workshop, mentioned in the source materials of the original English text, that is bound to the Sasando site. Even across this leadership transition, the community's reliance on informal, kinship-based coordination persisted unchanged, evidencing the durability of the informal governance arrangement examined under this study's first research question.

Participatory Decision-Making

Core strategic decisions such as pricing directions, which new products to prioritize for research and development, and whether to accept large-value orders have always been decided through internal discussions within the family, never left to a single designated responsible person to make the final call alone. Whether it is setting a price point for a product, allocating resources to which innovation initiatives, or deciding whether to take on a large order that could sway the enterprise's revenue, these major events that shape the company's trajectory are never dictated by a pre-appointed leader. All such matters are brought into the family's collective discussion, where all members weigh in together to reach the final decision. The materials state this choice explicitly: it was a deliberate arrangement, made to avoid the risk of the enterprise becoming completely reliant on a single individual if all power were concentrated in their hands. This deliberate avoidance of concentrating control in one individual is consistent with family firms' tendency to protect socioemotional wealth—the affective, relationship-based value the family derives from continued collective control—even at the cost of formal efficiency (Berrone et al., 2012). Put simply, the decision-makers intentionally refused to concentrate all decision-making power in one person to evade a widely recognized hazard: if the entire enterprise depended solely on that one core figure, the whole business would collapse if that person encountered an unexpected event. Adopting the family-wide consultation model was specifically arranged to mitigate this risk. After Jeremias Pah passed away, the process of the enterprise transferring power brought this risk fully to light. When Jeremias Pah died and the company needed to hand over leadership, the exact trouble mentioned earlier actually occurred during that transition. The risk that had only existed in hypothetical scenarios became a tangible, real-world situation through this power handover, laying bare the dangers of over-reliance on a core figure.

"Kalau di Rumah Sasando, semua keputusan strategis itu selalu dibahas bersama dalam forum keluarga. Jadi tidak ada keputusan yang diambil sepihak oleh satu orang saja." (Djitron Pah, community leader)

Participation in Production, Performance, and Marketing

To make Sasando, dragon palm leaves and bamboo are used as raw materials. From material preparation to the final completion of the finished product, the whole family participates from start to finish. Throughout the entire production process, each person has their own exclusive division of labor, and their work can be perfectly connected, with no one disrupting the rhythm. This old rule for passing on craftsmanship, which has been upheld since the workshop was first established, has never been interrupted, and has always been the core model for the transmission of knowledge and skills within the workshop. Whenever there are visitors, the people at the workshop put on Sasando performances for the guests. There is no fixed admission fee; after watching the performance, tourists may donate money if they wish, and it is completely voluntary. This voluntary, self-determined payment structure mirrors the pay-what-you-want mechanism documented

in marketing research, where sellers can sustain positive revenue despite ceding price control to buyers (Kim et al., 2009). The materials documenting this model mention that this model was chosen to practice the concept of gotong-royong culture should be open for everyone to access, not treated as a cold, transactional business that settles accounts for every single exchange. To make more people aware of Sasando, they are also carrying out various promotion efforts. Offline, they participate in national handicraft exhibitions in Indonesia, specifically Inacraft held in Jakarta. They also travel abroad to take part in international cultural events, including the Indonesia–Finland Festival 2025 in Helsinki; Arizona IndoFest 2025 in the United States. Such offline exhibition-based promotion is consistent with the marketing hurdles literature on artisan enterprises in emerging economies, which finds that handicraft producers rely heavily on exhibitions and fairs precisely because more scalable marketing channels remain difficult to access (Dalal et al., 2024). Online, they rely on social media for daily exposure, and a community website launched in December 2020 with support from Politeknik Negeri Kupang. After the outbreak of COVID, the number of on-site visitors dropped sharply. These online channels, which were originally only supplementary, became the key to keeping their promotion uninterrupted, helping them maintain their connection with the outside world. This pandemic-driven pivot to online promotion parallels a broader shift documented among handicraft enterprises elsewhere, where COVID-19 accelerated adoption of digital and innovative marketing practices as physical sales channels closed (Yadav et al., 2023).

“Wah, kalau soal pandemi, itu memang masa yang sangat berat bagi kami. Tapi kami tidak tinggal diam. Kami ingat betul, kami juga aktif memanfaatkan media sosial. Saya dan keluarga selalu gencar mempromosikan Sasando lewat platform digital.” (Djitron Pah, community leader)

Local Values and Family-Based Management

This community has successfully accomplished several tangible things one after another: The first is the establishment of a performance assessment system, which does not rely on external funding, and is fully sustained by voluntary donations of money and materials from all members. Additionally, the family raised funds on their own to personally build three public spaces: a small-scale museum, a weaving workshop for everyone to carry out weaving work, and a small theater capable of hosting events. Beyond that, when local residents talk about the cultural services provided to the community, they not only mention their spiritual significance, but also calculate the tangible economic benefits they bring, defining the value of these services from both spiritual and economic dimensions. In the original source materials, this entire series of actions is categorized as a concrete manifestation of gotong royong (mutual collaboration), and these events are also regarded as proof of the community's actively chosen state of economic self-reliance - even though they do accept support from the outside world, this state of self-reliance built on their own efforts has never changed from start to finish.

“Begini, bagi kami pertunjukan Sasando itu bukan sekadar komoditas yang kami jual secara kaku. Kami ingin pertunjukan ini menjadi bentuk pelayanan budaya yang terbuka untuk semua kalangan, tanpa memandang kemampuan ekonomi pengunjung. Makanya kami tidak menetapkan tarif resmi. Kami sediakan kotak sumbangan sukarela, dan pengunjung bebas memberi sesuai kemampuan dan kerelaan hatinya.” (Djitron Pah, community leader)

External Collaboration and Community Autonomy

During the process of promoting the implementation of the project, three external partners played key roles, with each party's support covering different specific links. The first is the provincial government of East Nusa Tenggara, whose Governor is Emanuel Melkiades Laka Lena. The provincial government assisted with publicity and promotion, planned to hold regular public performances in provincial-level cultural venues in the region, and step by step advanced the intellectual property application work. It ultimately obtained recognition from the World Intellectual Property Organization's and officially registered sasando as Indonesia's intellectual property. The second partner is Politeknik Negeri Kupang, which provided support in two phases through its own Regional Flagship Product Development Program (PPPUD). In the first phase, it delivered production machinery to set up the basic hardware for production. In the second phase, it allocated multimedia and digital marketing equipment, and built a dedicated website exclusively for the group to help them solve problems related to online promotion and audience outreach. The third partner is the civil society organization Ikatan Adhyaksa Dharma Karini (IAD). When its representatives visited in 2022, they brought a donation that filled the funding gap in the project. Even with so many external parties offering assistance, throughout the entire course of all cooperation, core strategic decision-making power has always remained firmly in the hands of that family. They never surrendered their decision-making authority because of receiving support from others: from major matters such as product pricing and product design, to small details including which orders to accept, all decisions are made by them. All support provided by

external parties only serves as an auxiliary to complement their capabilities, helping them fill in links they cannot complete on their own or lack the conditions to undertake. It never replaces their leading role, let alone deprives them of their right to make their own decisions.

"Kalau soal kerja sama, kami sangat terbuka dan proaktif. Kami sadar bahwa untuk mengembangkan Rumah Sasando, kami tidak bisa berjalan sendiri." (Djitron Pah, community leader)

Cultural Transmission, Innovation, and Sustainability

The craftsmanship and performing techniques of the sasando have been passed down and sustained entirely through informal means. Knowledgeable elder family members or skilled practitioners never hold specialized classes; instead, they only gradually teach relatives and close acquaintances around them the methods of crafting the instrument and the skills for stage performance, drawing from their own experience. The original source materials also mention that they are equally willing to teach foreign students who express interest in learning. As a result, the people who are able to master this craft have long not been limited to direct family members. Yet at no point has there ever been an intention to formalize the inheritance of this skill into a dedicated school, nor has a fixed, formal teaching syllabus ever been compiled. What to teach and how to teach it is entirely adjusted according to actual circumstances, with no rigid rules whatsoever. Beyond the inheritance of the craft, the family has also explored many innovative approaches to their products. Working together, the family created an electric sasando. This new instrument is fully compatible with the professional audio amplification equipment commonly used on modern stages, allowing its clear sound to carry through large performance venues, while preserving the unique timbre of the traditional sasando, so that the addition of electric components does not alter the instrument's original character. In addition to the innovation of the electric model, they have also greatly expanded their product range. Besides playable instruments, they produce miniature models of the sasando that serve as travel souvenirs and suitable gifts, as well as various standard versions of the instrument with different numbers of strings. The prices of these goods vary widely: a standard acoustic model costs approximately Rp600,000, while a professional-grade electric model can sell for Rp7,000,000.

"Kalau soal regenerasi, itu justru menjadi salah satu hal paling penting dan paling kami perhatikan di Rumah Sasando." (RY, younger-generation member)

"Awalnya, ide Sasando elektrik ini muncul dari diskusi kami sekeluarga. Waktu itu kami melihat kebutuhan pertunjukan modern yang semakin berkembang." (Ivan Pah, production manager)

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

At present, three categories of favorable conditions that can provide support have been sorted out. The first category is that everyone makes decisions collectively, taking families as units, and will not only rely on a single leader nothing is decided by a single leader; all matters are the result of joint discussions by the entire group, so there will never be a situation where only one person can take charge while others are unable to contribute. The second category is that this community has already demonstrated the ability to adapt to new environments it has launched the electric sasando, and also uses digital marketing for promotion. Even with these new adjustments that align with the times, the community has not lost the original cultural texture recognized by all. Outsiders can still perceive the original cultural characteristics and will not feel that its essence has changed. The third category is the availability of external support from multiple entities, covering government, higher education, and civil society. These external forces only help the community strengthen its own capabilities, and will not seize the community's dominant control over relevant affairs; the community still retains the autonomy to make its own decisions. There are also three categories of obstacles that slow down development. The first category is the inheritance gap among practitioners: too few new people are able to take over this work. Apart from immediate family members and those in their informal circles, almost no new blood has joined, making it impossible to pass on the craft. The second category is the insufficient accommodation for tourists: there is no available on-site lodging in the scenic area, so it cannot retain tourists who wish to stay for a few more days. The third category lies in promotion work. According to the sorted data, the current status of this work has not been fully optimized. There is still room for adjustment in the publicity efforts that aim to promote local products and make them known to more people, so the full role of promotion has not been brought into play.

"Kalau ditanya soal perasaan, saya merasa bangga sekaligus bertanggung jawab. Rumah Sasando ini bukan sekadar tempat usaha, tapi warisan budaya keluarga yang harus dijaga." (younger-generation family member)

Table 2. Research Participants and Data Sources

Participant Category	Role	Data Source	Relevance to the Study
Community leader	Djitron Pah - son of founder; community leader post-succession, co-manager of production and external relations	In-depth interview (face-to-face, May–June 2026)	Primary account of decision-making, pricing, and external-partnership practice
Production manager	Ivan Pah - son of founder, production manager	In-depth interview (face-to-face, May–June 2026)	Account of production processes and product innovation (electric sasando)
Active member (coded)	YL - active community member, not part of the Pah family	In-depth interview (face-to-face, May–June 2026)	Perspective from outside the immediate family leadership
Younger-generation member (coded)	RY - younger-generation member involved in regeneration, not part of the Pah family	In-depth interview (face-to-face, May–June 2026)	Perspective on regeneration and generational continuity

Note. Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on direct involvement in the community's planning, implementation, and evaluation activities. Two of the four informants (YL and RY, coded to protect privacy) are not members of the Pah family.

Table 3. Thematic Findings on Participatory Management

Main Theme	Subtheme	Empirical Evidence	Interpretation
Collective decision-making	Pricing and product decisions	Prices reported to vary by string count (~Rp600,000 to ~Rp7,000,000); decisions described as made through family discussion	Strategic authority is distributed rather than centralized in one leader
Production participation	Whole-family involvement in manufacture	Each family member holds a distinct role in the production chain	Participation is embedded in the production process itself, not only in governance meetings
Voluntary donation system	Performance without fixed admission fee	Donation box used in place of ticket pricing	Reflects a gotong-royong ethic prioritizing access over commercialization
External collaboration	Government, higher-education, and civil-society partnership	Politeknik Negeri Kupang machinery and website support; IAD donation; provincial government promotion and WIPO IP recognition	External support strengthens capacity without displacing family control
Regeneration	Informal, kin-and-network-based teaching	Family members teach relatives, acquaintances, and reported foreign students	Transmission extends past kinship but remains informal rather than institutionalized

Table 4. Participatory Management Practices by Stage

Management Stage	Participatory Practice	Actors Involved	Evidence	Implication
Planning	Family deliberation on pricing, product line, and order acceptance	Family members, principally the co-managers	Reported consistently across multiple production and pricing decisions	Distributes strategic authority; reduces single-leader dependence
Implementation	Rotational performance and production roles across family members	All family members, across generations	Rotational performance for visitors; production-chain role specialization	Builds skill and confidence across generations; functions as informal training
Evaluation	Informal review of marketing and partnership outcomes (e.g., shift from physical renovation aid to digital-marketing aid during COVID-19)	Family, in consultation with Politeknik Negeri Kupang	Reported reallocation of program-2 PPPUD support after discussion with the community	Shows adaptive, consultative evaluation rather than fixed program delivery

Table 5. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors for Cultural Sustainability

Category	Factor	Empirical Evidence	Implication for Cultural Sustainability
Supporting	Collective family leadership	Leadership distributed among Jeremias Pah's sons after his death rather than concentrated in one successor	Reduces single-point-of-failure risk to continuity
Supporting	Product and marketing innovation	Electric sasando; diversified price points; international festival participation; WIPO recognition	Expands market reach while preserving traditional identity
Supporting	Multi-stakeholder external partnership	Provincial government, Politeknik Negeri Kupang, IAD	Strengthens production and marketing capacity without displacing community control
Inhibiting	Limited regeneration beyond the family/informal network	No formal school or curriculum for training new practitioners	Long-term continuity remains dependent on informal, ad hoc teaching
Inhibiting	Inadequate visitor accommodation	No on-site lodging reported	Limits tourism-linked revenue and extended visitor engagement
Inhibiting	Promotion not yet fully optimized	Source material's own assessment of promotional gaps	Constrains market reach relative to potential

Table 6. Comparison With Previous Studies

Previous Study	Context	Main Finding	Current Study	Contribution
Nainggolan (2014)	PLOT opera troupe, North Sumatra	Non-transparent participatory leadership risks internal conflict	Rumah Sasando's family deliberation is reported as consistently open across generations	Contrasts a case where participatory leadership functions without the conflict risk Nainggolan identifies
Puspitasari (2025)	Krida Beksa Wirama classical dance institution, Yogyakarta	Century-long transformation through structural revitalization, adaptive teaching, and digital representation	Rumah Sasando shows comparable adaptive innovation (electric sasando, digital marketing) but without any formal institutional revitalization process	Shows that comparable adaptive capacity can occur without institutional formalization
Ruastiti (2018)	Davedan Show, Bali	Implementative-participatory method between researchers and performers sustains a commercial tourist performance	Rumah Sasando's participatory practice is internally generated by the family, not researcher-facilitated	Extends participatory-performance literature to a non-facilitated, endogenous case

Participatory Management as a Cultural Governance Practice

Scholar Feng proposed a set of criteria for measuring governance performance in (2006), which includes three dimensions: the first dimension is which individuals are able to participate in the governance process, the second dimension is how relevant decisions should be communicated to participants, and the third dimension is how much actual decision-making power the participants in governance hold. When we measure the practices of Rumah Sasando's against this set of criteria, we find that its performance in all three dimensions is outstanding, and it did not utilize any established formal governance mechanism throughout the entire process. Looking first at the participation dimension, Rumah Sasando's participation right covers the entire family, and all members of the household can join the decision-making process, with a small subset of people never being singled out as the only participants. Next, on the communication dimension, there were no pre-scheduled fixed formal meetings either; all decision-related communication was advanced through continuous informal daily discussions. Finally, with regard to actual decision-making power, core matters such as product pricing, which product categories to develop, and whether to accept a client's order were all directly decided through these daily discussions, rather than following a model where everyone's opinions are only taken as a reference and a small number of people have the final say in the end. These circumstances precisely illustrate one issue: when Feng designed this governance framework back then, he primarily took formal institutions as the applicable objects, but now applying this framework to an informal

kinship-based governance model like Rumah Sasando's can be done without requiring almost any modifications. And this cross-scenario transferability of the framework has never been directly verified in any previously published research literature.

Family-Based Management and Local Cultural Values

Everyone spontaneously donated money and materials, and pooled funds to build public facilities in the community. This voluntary, non-monetized mode of collective contribution mirrors recent findings on how gotong-royong functions as a durable collective-action norm in other Indonesian community settings (Paramita et al., 2023). Measured by the criteria put forward by Arnstein in (1969), this is genuine citizen power, not a perfunctory show of going through the motions. The reason it is not a mere formality is that these evaluation criteria have long drawn a clear line between "the superficial participation that only puts up a front to get the public to join in for show" and "the actual power where the public truly has the final say". The two things the community has done right here fall exactly into the latter category. The community did not wait for external official agencies to solicit its opinions; it was the one making the decisions, setting the rules, and clarifying how the community's cultural resources would be used. Put simply, it was not an external power entity that dragged the community in just to make up the numbers; the community itself was the party holding the decision-making power. It had the final say over who could use these cultural venues and supporting facilities, and how they would be used. However, this case cannot be used as evidence to claim that the family-led management model works everywhere it is applied. In the raw materials of this study, no contrasting counter cases were collected that is, cases where management relying on kinship ties ultimately led to conflicts and excluded certain groups of people. Without such counter cases for comparison, we cannot confirm the universality of the family model. Therefore, the conclusions drawn from this case can only be regarded as unique characteristics of this single incident. They cannot be generalized to the entire category of all family-operated cultural institutions, nor can we claim that all family-operated cultural institutions will achieve the same positive outcomes.

Participation, Power, and Decision-Making

This set of research methods still leaves an unresolved residual flaw, and the following will specify exactly what this shortcoming is. Previously, the number of interviewees recruited was smaller; this time, to collect information, the group of participating information providers has been expanded to four people, two of whom do not belong to the Pah core family. To maintain confidentiality, the code names assigned to these two individuals are YL and RY. However, after collecting all research data, the research team did not conduct a "member check"-that is, presenting the organized research analysis and interpretations to the original information-providing interviewees for reconfirmation, to ensure that the original intentions of the interviewees were not misunderstood-and never verified the accuracy of these contents with the four interviewees. Therefore, the claim of "whole-family participation" mentioned in the research is mostly supported only by the oral accounts of the interviewees during the interviews, and cannot be regarded as a verified, authentic and reliable interpretation confirmed by the interviewees themselves. If one rigorously applies Arnstein's and Fung's theoretical framework to analyze this research, it is necessary to first acknowledge one fact: although the conclusions of this research are no longer centered solely on the accounts of core leaders, the interpretations drawn by the research team have never been validated with those information-providing interviewees. The aforementioned flaw must be directly addressed by the research team when publishing the formal version of this study, and the optimal solution is to supplement the member check in any subsequent follow-up research.

Cultural Transmission and Sustainability

Some people have transformed the traditional Sasan-doro into an electronic version, and the same group that carried out this work also adjusted the original marketing method to digital platform marketing. These two developments together align perfectly with a judgment put forward in the literature on cultural sustainability (Hurtado, 2017) that if a group has the ability to adapt to changes, it can make up for one of its weak dimensions. In the context of this case, the weak dimension that needs to be remedied is the group's cultural regeneration capacity, which refers to the inability to smoothly sustain and pass down its own traditional culture, and this weakness is also the most fully documented and clearly defined shortcoming in all records concerning this group. At present, all the data we can obtain cannot prove that this model of remedying shortcomings through adaptive capacity can outlast the observation period of the original study and be sustained over the long term. This issue can only be treated as an open question awaiting resolution; we cannot directly confirm that it is definitely valid, nor can we directly negate its effectiveness.

External Collaboration and Community Autonomy

The three parties that cooperate with this family art community the government, the polytechnic institute, and the civil society organization all follow the same model. All the support they provide is used to supplement the community's hardware and resources, such as purchasing equipment, allocating digital tools, and disbursing funds. None of them have ever interfered in the internal management of the community, nor have they meddled in the internal operations that are solely decided by the family art community itself. Let alone interference, none of the three parties have obtained the right to speak on the family's core decision-making; they do not even have the qualification to participate in core decisions, and are completely unable to join in the discussion and finalization of the family's important decisions. This situation is completely consistent with the conclusions on community tourism management mentioned in studies of other regions. Those studies recorded identical scenarios: for example, the scenic area management committees in those locations, while receiving international technical support, firmly kept core management rights in the hands of local leaders, and never allowed external supporters to touch their internal decision-making power. Putting these similar cases across different scenarios together, a general rule can be extracted: when external support for a traditional art community is limited only to enhancing the community's capabilities, and is not aimed at taking control of the community, most members of the community will perceive this support as strengthening their right to independent operation, rather than weakening that power.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this case illustrates one point: the participatory-governance frameworks originally designed for formal institutions (Fung, 2006), as well as the participation ladders constructed around clearly definable decision-making events (Arnstein, 1969), can also be smoothly implemented in informal, constantly negotiating kinship communities. Both tools were originally developed for formal organizations such as official government agencies and enterprises, where in the applicable scenarios, every decision-making matter has clear timelines, and it is possible to clearly distinguish who participated at which node and what they did. However, the kinship community in this case is different: it is not a registered formal organization, and when members of the community gather to discuss matters, it does not count as a separate event each time a meeting is held; instead, discussions are often advanced during casual daily chats, with no clear start or end points. Even in such a loose and flexible environment, these two tools originally designed for formal scenarios can work well, without being completely incompatible with the local context. Yet to apply this set of methods, it is necessary to first adjust the approach to research documentation: one cannot record the community's consultations as isolated participation events with clear occurrence dates, but must track them as a continuously ongoing practice. If one adheres to the original documentation method, archiving every casual gathering as an independent participation event, they will miss the continuous connections between these discussions and fail to grasp the actual operating logic of the community. Only by following the community's own rhythm, documenting the continuous consultations as a single, ongoing event, can one accurately understand its real situation. From a practical perspective, cultural policy practitioners who provide support for similar communities must adjust their support content according to the capacity gaps identified by the communities themselves, instead of rigidly applying a one-size-fits-all institutional-strengthening template and forcefully imposing a unified support package. When carrying out support work, many practitioners are accustomed to bringing a pre-prepared plan to the site this plan was originally designed to address capacity shortcomings in formal institutions, and they force it onto every community they encounter, never first asking what the other party actually lacks. However, there are examples of correct practices in this case: Politeknik Negeri Kupang did exactly that. After consulting with Djitron Pah, they reallocated the aid originally planned for renovating physical premises into resources to support the community in carrying out digital marketing. They first asked the community members, learned that their real need was not to repair buildings, but to sell their own products, and thus adjusted the use of the aid, instead of forcefully imposing resources based on their initial plans.

Comparison With International Literature

First, let's bring up South Africa's Empatheatre, which adopts a participatory theatre model-it does not treat theatre as a merecarrier for performances, but intentionally frames performances as a set of research methods that enable all parties to sit down and engage in dialogue. When implementing this project, it brings together three groups of people: artistic creators, academic researchers, and the local community where the project is deployed. All parties gather to discuss local social and environmental issues, turning theatre into a researchcarrier for communication among all sides. While Rumah Sasando also carries out practices that engage multiple parties, it follows a completely different path. Its practices are not one-off events organized by outsiders; instead, they have grown organically from within, with the entire process from launch to implementation carried out independently, and the work has continued steadily without interruption. At the

core of the entire project is a single family. This family not only acts as the operator that implements each practice one by one, but also conducts long-term evaluations of every piece of work they complete. From start to finish, there is no external lead to drive or supervise the entire process-this family fully manages and steers every aspect of the project on their own. This difference in models arose from the genuinely distinct practical contexts in which the two projects operate. It is not a matter of one project having a higher level of public participation and the other a lower one; there is no hierarchy of quality or superiority between them. One final reminder: when comparing these two projects, we must never go beyond the scope that can be supported by existing materials to conduct unfounded overinterpretation or extended comparison.

Conclusions

This study examines the participatory governance model of the Rumah Sasando Oebelo community. This community is located in Kupang Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, its members are all bound together by kinship ties, and they sustain their operations through the creation and performance of traditional music, forming a fully functional operating group. The study set three core research questions, and the answer to the first is as follows. The participatory governance of this community, from start to finish, is advanced entirely through collective deliberation within the family, and no formal governance mechanisms have ever been adopted. From small-scale matters such as production arrangements and product pricing, to large-scale decisions including how to pursue product innovation and upgrading, how to expand marketing channels, and how to negotiate partnerships with external institutions, all decisions of every scale are reached through collective family discussion. This conclusion draws primarily on the in-depth interviews with Djitron Pah and Ivan Pah (Table 2), corroborated by participatory observation of family deliberation during fieldwork and cross-checked against secondary community documents through source and method triangulation (see Trustworthiness). Next is the conclusion to the second research question: the participation of all community members covers the three core stages of the entire operation cycle. The first is the advance planning stage: regardless of the pricing of products or the future development direction of products, all matters are finalized through collective discussion, with no single member able to make unilateral decisions. The second is the implementation stage: whether it is music-related production work or performance tasks, these responsibilities are not permanently assigned to a small number of people. Instead, they are rotated among members of different generations, with every family involved and every member able to contribute. The third is the post-implementation review stage: this stage does not involve rigid formal assessments, but still adopts the informal deliberation method of collective discussion to review the marketing effectiveness of the preceding period and whether the partnerships negotiated with external parties have achieved the expected outcomes. Midway through the project, Politeknik Negeri Kupang's shifted all of its originally planned support for the community to the area of digital marketing, which is a concrete example of the activities that took place during this informal assessment stage. This account of the three stages is supported by the same interview and observational evidence summarized in Table 4, triangulated across informants rather than resting on a single account. Finally, the answer to the third research question: three core conditions support the long-term operation of this community. First, the community's own collective leadership structure, in which no single person holds absolute decision-making power; second, the community's innovative capacity to adapt to new changes, rather than rigidly adhering to outdated practices; third, the external partnerships established with multiple stakeholders, which enable the community to access external resources to sustain its development. However, it also faces three categories of constraints that hinder its growth: first, it cannot expand beyond its core family circle to recruit new members, so it cannot inject fresh blood into the community; second, there are insufficient accommodation facilities for visiting guests, making it difficult to retain visitors; third, its external promotion work has not been refined, so it cannot fully leverage its own strengths. These supporting and inhibiting conditions are drawn from the cross-informant synthesis reported in Table 5, rather than from any single participant's account.

Theoretically, this case indicates that kinship-based deliberation can substitute for the formal structures that participatory-governance frameworks (Arnstein, 1969; Fung, 2006) typically assume, extending rather than merely illustrating these frameworks' applicability to informal, family-operated cultural enterprises (cf. Theoretical and Practical Implications, above). The core academic contribution of this study is that it documents a rare practical case: previously, there was a set of theories in academic circles called "participatory governance", which, from its inception to its development, was always refined around formal institutions with explicit rules and official recognition. No one expected that this set of theories could be applied to informal organizations. The cultural enterprise identified in this study is different: it has no written institutions whatsoever, and binds all its members together entirely through kinship ties, making it a

completely informal organization. Yet this set of theories, originally only suited for formal institutions, turned out to be fully applicable to it. What is even more interesting is that, relying on this informal governance model, this enterprise has not only achieved results that meet international standards, but has also firmly grasped the initiative of its own development. It has obtained WIPO intellectual property recognition, and has also appeared on the stage of international art festivals these are all industry-recognized outcomes that meet international standards. What is even rarer is that from start to finish, it never ceded its strategic discourse power, and never allowed external partners to decide its own development direction. In terms of practical application, this case also serves as a reminder for all cultural heritage support programs: to achieve the optimal program effect, one cannot impose a template at the very beginning. It is necessary to first immerse oneself in the community, clarify what capacity-building support the community itself puts forward and truly needs, and then delineate the coverage scope of the program based on these needs. If one does the opposite, forcing a one-size-fits-all institutional building template to remodel the community, the program's effect will definitely be inferior to that of a plan formulated in line with the community's actual needs.

There remain some unresolved limitations in this study, all of which we have proactively sorted out to clarify to readers first. We have now fully documented all core basic information of this study in written form, with no key content omitted: First, regarding the interviewee information providers, we recruited a total of 4 participants, all of whom were specifically selected according to the actual needs of the study, rather than ordinary people recruited randomly. Among these 4 participants, 2 have no family relationship with the subjects involved in the study. Second, regarding the fieldwork arrangements, the on-site research was conducted from May to June 2026, during which we completed a total of 4 site visits at the research locations. Finally, regarding the ethical review procedures followed by the study: all participants in the study have provided verbal confirmation, stating that they clearly understand the research content and participate voluntarily. This verbal informed consent is supported by an official letter issued by the institution, which proves that the entire consent process complies with regulations; in addition, we have obtained ethical approval issued by IAKN Kupang, with the approval number 2422/IKN.01/05/2026. To ensure the credibility of the study, we only adopted two triangulation methods: source triangulation, which cross-checks information sources, and method triangulation, which cross-checks research operation methods. Our research team has proactively confirmed that three tasks that could further enhance the study's credibility were not implemented in this research: first, the member check work, which involves presenting the preliminary research conclusions to the study participants for verification and confirmation; second, the audit trail records, which fully document all research operation steps to facilitate subsequent reviews; third, the reflective memos, which record the researchers' own thinking and changes in positions during the research process. These unimplemented links are real omissions of this study. We have not concealed these issues; instead, we have explicitly listed these shortcomings, defined them as flaws at the research methodology level, and never packaged these weaknesses as strengths of the study. For future similar studies that follow up on this theme, it is strongly recommended to add the member check link to fill this gap.

There are two valuable types of future research directions that can be advanced, both of which can bring practical benefits to subsequent explorations in this field. The first type of research is to conduct a comparative study of the case completed in this paper, and other traditional art enterprises in Indonesia that are also operated through kinship ties we previously observed in this case that the support provided to such enterprises by external parties follows a model of helping them improve their own capabilities rather than interfering in and controlling their operations. The purpose of this comparative study is to verify whether this model can be universally applied to all similar enterprises, and whether it can also work in other traditional art enterprises of the same type. In addition to this horizontal comparative study, the second research direction that can be advanced is to carry out long-term follow-up research. This research will continuously observe and record the conditions of the research subjects over the next full decade, and ultimately assess whether the intergenerational renewal gap of this group will widen further or gradually narrow over these ten years.

Acknowledgments

All authors of this study would first like to express our gratitude here. We would like to thank the Rumah Sasando Oebelo community, which provided us with a great deal of critical support throughout the advancement of this research. We would especially like to extend special thanks to two members of the community, Djitron Pah and Ivan Pah, for taking the time to cooperate with our research work and helping us complete the relevant content of this study as information providers. There is an additional note on

materials that require supplementation: a portion of the content that should have been included in the acknowledgments was not listed in the original materials. This portion of DATA NEEDED includes all funding sources used in the research, the corresponding grant numbers for funding projects, or any support provided by institutions for this study. The author team of this article must fully supplement all this content before submitting the article.

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