



## Social Innovation in the Management of Coastal Community Assets in Surabaya City

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose** – This study aims to explore how social innovation practices contribute to the management of community assets in coastal areas of Surabaya. The research emphasizes the role of local participation and grassroots initiatives in strengthening sustainable livelihoods and reducing multidimensional poverty among fishing communities.

**Design/methods/approach** – This is a qualitative research using a case study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory poverty assessments (PPA), focus group discussions, and direct field observations. The analysis employed content analysis and the sustainable livelihood framework to assess five key community assets: human, social, natural, physical, and financial.

**Findings** – The findings indicate that social innovations have emerged across all five asset domains. These include the establishment of community-run fish processing kiosks, women-led product marketing initiatives, informal learning groups, and local savings cooperatives. However, disparities remain in the distribution of government aid and the sustainability of infrastructure development. Social capital and financial assets remain the weakest aspects, requiring further strategic support.

**Research implications/limitations** – This study is context-specific to the urban coastal area of Sukolilo in Surabaya. While it provides valuable insight into community-based innovation, its generalizability may be limited. Further research is recommended in different coastal settings to enrich comparative understanding.

**Originality/value** – This study contributes to the discourse on community empowerment by linking social innovation with asset-based poverty reduction in coastal urban areas. It provides a grounded framework for designing community-driven development strategies that align with the sustainable livelihood approach.

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## Introduction

Poverty in coastal communities is a persistent and multidimensional issue, particularly evident in urban areas of Indonesia such as Surabaya, where fishing communities face severe socio-economic and environmental challenges. The intersection of low educational levels, limited income opportunities, and deteriorating living conditions exacerbates the poverty experienced in these communities. Furthermore, environmental degradation, particularly concerning marine resources, significantly impacts

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livelihoods dependent on fishing, highlighting the intertwined nature of social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities.

Research indicates that fishing communities often experience increased food and water insecurity due to the synergistic effects of poverty, suggesting that low income is a significant determinant of access to essential resources like food and water (Fabinyi, 2018). Studies emphasize the role of various vulnerabilities that coastal communities face, including economic loss from illegal fishing practices that deplete fish stocks, leading to further declines in income and living conditions (Mozumder et al., 2023). Kaliman et al. found that insufficient governmental support in the form of financial aid, infrastructure, and resource management could lead to exacerbated vulnerabilities, emphasizing the need for nuanced approaches to poverty alleviation (Achsanuddin, 2018). Addressing poverty in coastal communities like those in Surabaya necessitates a departure from conventional top-down strategies in favor of inclusive, locally rooted strategies. Recognizing the strengths and inherent knowledge of these communities is critical for effective intervention.

The Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing poverty, highlighting the importance of five critical assets: human, social, physical, financial, and natural. By utilizing this framework, stakeholders can analyze various types of capital that impact livelihoods and poverty alleviation strategies. The SLA emphasizes that effective interventions must consider the multifaceted nature of poverty and the available assets within a community. According to Apine et al., the SLA acknowledges the interplay between different types of capitals, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of how these capitals can transform in response to external factors, which is crucial in poverty reduction efforts within small-scale fisheries (Apine et al., 2019). Furthermore, the framework's ability to enhance the understanding of livelihoods in the context of poverty is supported by various studies, indicating its utility in developing effective interventions (- et al., 2022; Su et al., 2021).

In light of the complexities surrounding poverty, the SLA stands out as a vital framework that incorporates multiple dimensions of capital. Leveraging this approach can significantly enhance the effectiveness of poverty alleviation strategies. Social innovation emerges as a promising avenue within the Sustainable Livelihood Approach, as it champions community-

driven initiatives that seek to address social issues through cooperative and participatory methods. By emphasizing new forms of collaboration and organization, social innovations can effectively tackle societal challenges, particularly in resource-constrained environments. Mulgan emphasizes that social innovations often arise in contexts where traditional structures are inadequate, leading to the empowerment and resilience of communities through creative problem-solving (Lenhoff et al., 2020). Additionally, community-led innovations in health and education exemplify how participatory approaches can cultivate local engagement and improve quality of life (Chen et al., 2019). Martínez explores how crowdsourcing and competition can stimulate creativity and contribute to developing innovative solutions tailored to local needs (Martínez, 2017). Therefore, integrating social innovation within the SLA framework enhances community resilience and capacity to address poverty effectively through localized approaches that leverage existing social assets.

Recent research underscores the transformative potential of social innovation in various domains such as rural development, disaster recovery, and inclusive education, indicating its significance in fostering community resilience and empowerment. Despite recognition of these benefits, the application and evolution of social innovations specifically in urban coastal communities of the Global South have not received adequate scholarly attention. This is particularly critical in contexts where informal livelihoods predominate and infrastructure is often insufficient, which can exacerbate vulnerability to poverty. Scholars such as (Osei & Zhuang, 2020) highlight that social innovations can generate significant improvements in community welfare by promoting new forms of organization and cooperation, particularly emphasizing the role of social capital in enhancing entrepreneurial opportunities in rural settings, which may also parallel challenges faced in urban environments (Osei & Zhuang, 2020). Furthermore, (Neumeier, 2016) asserts that effective rural development policies must intentionally shape the factors influencing social innovation processes, echoing the need for localized strategies that leverage community strengths (Neumeier, 2016).

Given the highlighted transformative potential of social innovation, it is important to focus on the unique challenges faced by urban coastal communities like those in Surabaya. By exploring how these communities develop and implement social innovations, we can gain insights into effective

poverty management and the enhancement of communal assets. This study aims to fill the research gap by examining how local communities in Sukolilo, a coastal district in Surabaya, develop and implement social innovations to manage their communal assets and cope with poverty. The context of Sukolilo presents unique challenges, including informal livelihoods and uneven infrastructure, which necessitate innovative approaches to community problem-solving and resource management. According to Maldonado-Mariscal (2023), grassroots innovation and community-preneurship are crucial in shaping social innovations that respond to local needs and contexts in the Global South (Maldonado-Mariscal, 2023). This is particularly pertinent in urban coastal communities, where the interplay of social dynamics and resource constraints must be navigated creatively to foster engagement and collaboration. Additionally, studies have indicated that communities that harness local knowledge and collective action can achieve more effective outcomes in managing resources and addressing socio-economic issues (Colovic & Schruoffenegger, 2021; Bayugo et al., 2022). Thus, understanding the dynamics of social innovations in Sukolilo can provide valuable insights into the mechanisms through which urban coastal communities can successfully mobilize their collective resources and improve their living conditions.

The **aim** of this paper is to examine the role of social innovation in the management of community assets in the coastal area of Surabaya, based on the sustainable livelihood framework. By combining qualitative field data with asset-based analysis, the study seeks to uncover the forms, drivers, and challenges of community-led innovations in the fishing villages of Surabaya. The paper is structured as follows. The next section provides a review of literature on sustainable livelihood and social innovation. This is followed by a description of the research methodology, including data collection and analysis techniques. The subsequent sections present the results and discussion, focusing on how social innovations shape and transform different types of community assets. The paper concludes by summarizing key findings and offering practical implications for community empowerment and policy development.

In doing so, this study contributes to a growing body of knowledge on grassroots innovation, poverty reduction, and participatory development. It provides insights not only for researchers and practitioners in social

development, but also for policymakers seeking more inclusive and sustainable solutions for coastal poverty.

## Methods

### *Research Design*

This study employed a qualitative research design with a case study approach to explore community-driven social innovations in managing livelihood assets in a coastal area of Surabaya. A qualitative research design facilitates an in-depth exploration of complex social phenomena and allows researchers to capture the dynamics and intricacies of community interactions, innovations, and the requirements for managing resources effectively in real-life contexts.

As noted by Kim et al., qualitative research designs allow for the examination of participants' perspectives and experiences, providing rich insights into their contexts and practices Kim et al. (2016). This article discusses the characteristics of qualitative descriptive studies and emphasizes how such designs are valuable for gathering nuanced data about human experiences. Poucher et al. also emphasize the importance of methodological coherence in qualitative research, which can enhance the validity of study findings (Poucher et al., 2019). The case study approach aligns well with these principles, enabling a thorough examination of community dynamics and the unique challenges related to poverty and resource limitations inherent in coastal areas, as discussed in the context of qualitative research frameworks by Rendle et al. (Rendle et al., 2019). Therefore, the qualitative case study approach not only allows for a detailed examination of community dynamics in Sukolilo, Surabaya, but is also crucial for understanding how social innovations evolve in response to local challenges, thereby enhancing the overall quality of this study.

### *Population and Sample*

The research was conducted in **Sukolilo Fishermen Village**, a coastal settlement in Surabaya known for its persistent poverty and livelihood vulnerability. The target population consisted of **fishing households, community leaders, female producers, and members of local organizations**. A **purposive sampling** method was used to select **25 key informants**, including active community members, local government officers, women entrepreneurs, and youth involved in community initiatives.

### 3. Data Collection Techniques and Instrument Development

Multiple qualitative data collection methods were employed to capture rich, contextualized information:

- **In-depth interviews** with key community actors were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide, covering themes related to the five livelihood assets.
- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)** with local residents and organizations explored collective experiences of asset utilization and innovation.
- **Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA)** was used to understand community perceptions of poverty, vulnerability, and innovation.
- **Direct field observation** was also conducted to capture daily practices, community initiatives, and environmental conditions.

The **research instruments** (interview and FGD guides) were developed based on the sustainable livelihood framework, particularly focusing on the five capital assets: **human, social, natural, physical, and financial**. The instruments were validated through expert review and pilot testing.

### 4. Presence of Researcher and Research Location

The research was conducted over a **three-month period** (March–May 2024) in **Sukolilo, Surabaya**. The researcher was present in the field throughout the data collection process, participating in local activities, informal gatherings, and social programs. This immersive engagement allowed deeper insight into community values, practices, and trust-building. **Local informants**—including village heads and youth coordinators—helped facilitate access and provided contextual understanding during data gathering.

### 5. Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using a combination of:

- **Content Analysis**, to categorize and interpret themes related to the role of social innovation in each of the five asset domains.
- **Descriptive Qualitative Analysis**, to organize findings according to the sustainable livelihood framework.
- **Delphi Technique**, involving iterative consultation with experts and practitioners, was employed to refine and validate key factors and

strategic concepts related to poverty reduction and asset management.

## 6. Validity and Trustworthiness

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, several strategies were applied:

- **Triangulation** of data sources (interviews, FGDs, PPA, and observations).
- **Member checking**, where preliminary findings were shared with participants for feedback and confirmation.
- **Peer debriefing** with academic colleagues and local NGO staff to reduce researcher bias.
- **Audit trail**, documenting the research process, coding, and thematic interpretations.

## Result

### 1.1. Sustainable Livelihood Level in the Coastal Community

The findings from this study indicate significant disparities in the community's access to livelihood assets in the Sukolilo coastal village, highlighting inequalities that can hinder development and poverty alleviation efforts.

These disparities arise due to various socio-economic factors that affect how community members access and utilize their available resources, influencing their overall well-being and resilience to external shocks. For instance, Ahmed et al. highlight how varying levels of access to land and natural resources can destabilize livelihoods in coastal regions, particularly where environmental stressors exacerbate existing vulnerabilities Ahmed et al. (2019).

Evidence from the Sustainable Livelihood Framework indicates that communities rely on five critical capital assets—natural, physical, financial, human, and social capital—to navigate their livelihoods effectively. Each of these assets plays a vital role in shaping community resilience; for example, Muringai et al. emphasize that social assets, defined by interpersonal relationships and community networks, are crucial for enhancing livelihood outcomes and mitigating poverty (Muringai et al., 2019). The importance of each capital differs among communities, which can result in unequal access and utilization of these assets, as demonstrated by various studies on coastal communities (Kristiningrum et al., 2023).

In conclusion, addressing these disparities is essential for implementing effective interventions. Fostering equitable access to livelihood assets within the Sukolilo community can enhance resilience and contribute to sustainable development by enabling all members to leverage their potential fully.

1. **Human asset** was the highest at **65%**, indicating relatively strong local knowledge and labor availability.
2. **Social asset** was the lowest at **20%**, reflecting weak organizational participation and limited trust among residents.
3. **Natural asset** reached **50%**, associated with access to coastal resources but limited by pollution and fishing regulation.
4. **Physical asset** was rated **60%**, largely due to the availability of basic infrastructure, though unevenly distributed.
5. **Financial asset** stood at **30%**, constrained by unstable income and limited savings.

## 1.2. Factors Affecting Asset Utilization and Community Poverty

### 1.2.1. Financial Asset Constraints

Based on content analysis and structured interviews, financial difficulties remain a critical factor affecting poverty:

1. Fuel costs were disproportionate to fish yields, creating recurring losses.
2. Households struggled with daily expenses for food, education, and health, leaving no room for savings.
3. Debt was common, with informal lending dominating financial activity.

### 1.2.2. Human Asset Limitations

The majority of fishermen had low levels of formal education, most having completed only elementary or junior high school. This led to:

1. Low adaptability to technology and innovation.
2. Minimal participation in formal training programs.
3. Reliance on traditional fishing skills passed down informally.

### 1.2.3. Social Asset Weakness

Social cohesion and trust levels were low, resulting in:

1. Minimal participation in fishermen's organizations.
2. Weak information-sharing systems.
3. Limited community collaboration in problem-solving.

### 1.3. Community-Driven Social Innovations

Despite structural limitations, several innovations were identified that demonstrated community resilience and creativity in managing assets.

#### 1.3.1. Physical and Financial Innovations

1. Establishment of community-owned **fish processing kiosks**.
2. Informal **saving groups** and small cooperatives emerging without external facilitation.

#### 1.3.2. Human and Social Capacity Building

1. Women-led initiatives in **shrimp paste and salted fish production**.
2. Youth-led education initiatives for tutoring and digital marketing skills.
3. Regular **pengajian** (religious gatherings) functioning as social safety nets.

Table 1. Key Community Innovations Across Livelihood Asset Categories

Asset Type	Innovation Type	Community Impact
Physical	Fish processing kiosks, road maintenance	Improved product value, better market access
Financial	Informal savings groups, microcredit access	Increased financial independence
Human	Skill-based training for women/youth	Enhanced capabilities and income potential
Social	Collective decision-making forums	Strengthened trust and participation
Natural	Fishing zone mapping and seasonal awareness	Increased efficiency and sustainability

## Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that although coastal communities in Surabaya—particularly in the Sukolilo area—face significant challenges in achieving sustainable livelihoods, various forms of **social innovation** have emerged as adaptive strategies to manage and optimize limited community assets. These innovations appear across multiple domains, from the

establishment of informal saving groups and fish processing kiosks to youth-led educational initiatives and women's economic empowerment.

#### Interpretation of Findings in Light of Previous Research

The finding that human capital is relatively high at 65% aligns with Chambers and Conway's (1992) assertion that local knowledge and labor are critical assets for livelihood strategies in low-income communities.

This high level of human capital reflects the ability of community members to utilize their skills, knowledge, and labor to enhance their livelihoods amidst resource limitations. According to Ellis (2000), human capital is essential, as the skills and capabilities of individuals significantly contribute to a community's adaptive capacity in managing livelihoods and overcoming poverty. Local knowledge prevalent in communities helps individuals identify and exploit available opportunities, which is vital for livelihood sustainability.

However, the limited financial capital at 30% and social capital at 20% indicate systemic constraints that hinder broader community development. These low levels of financial and social assets suggest that community members may struggle to access necessary funds and support networks, which are crucial for pursuing diverse livelihood strategies and ensuring long-term stability. Zinda & Zhang (2017) highlight that communities with inadequate financial resources often experience limited opportunities for investment and entrepreneurship, further perpetuating cycles of poverty. Furthermore, low social capital constrains community members' ability to collaborate or access informal support networks, which can be detrimental to their resilience in facing economic challenges.

This finding echoes Ellis's assertion that access to financial services and social networks is often a limiting factor in asset-based development, underscoring the intricate interplay between different forms of capital in enhancing community resilience and economic opportunities.

In conclusion, while high human capital presents an opportunity for the community to leverage local knowledge and skills, the substantial limitations in financial and social capital necessitate targeted interventions to foster holistic community development and improve overall livelihoods.

The presence of women-led production efforts and informal learning initiatives also mirrors findings from Moulaert et al. (2013), who argue that **social innovation often flourishes in underserved contexts**, particularly when traditional systems fail to meet local needs. These grassroots innovations often involve collective action, mutual aid, and reconfiguration of roles, as seen in this study where religious gatherings (*pengajian*) double as information-sharing platforms and informal support systems.

The study also found that **infrastructural improvements and physical asset utilization** (e.g., community-maintained kiosks and roads) were driven not by top-down policies but by the initiative of local actors. This is consistent with Franz et al. (2012), who emphasize that innovation in community infrastructure often stems from local commitment rather than external intervention.

#### Broader Implications

The findings from this study indicate significant disparities in the community's access to livelihood assets in the Sukolilo coastal village, highlighting inequalities that can hinder development and poverty alleviation efforts.

These disparities arise due to various socio-economic factors that affect how community members access and utilize their available resources, influencing their overall well-being and resilience to external shocks. For instance, Ahmed et al. highlight how varying levels of access to land and natural resources can destabilize livelihoods in coastal regions, particularly where environmental stressors exacerbate existing vulnerabilities Ahmed et al. (2019).

Evidence from the Sustainable Livelihood Framework indicates that communities rely on five critical capital assets—natural, physical, financial, human, and social capital—to navigate their livelihoods effectively. Each of these assets plays a vital role in shaping community resilience; for example, Muringai et al. emphasize that social assets, defined by interpersonal relationships and community networks, are crucial for enhancing livelihood outcomes and mitigating poverty (Muringai et al., 2019). The importance of each capital differs among communities, which can result in unequal access and utilization of these assets, as demonstrated by various studies on coastal communities (Kristiningrum et al., 2023).

In conclusion, addressing these disparities is essential for implementing effective interventions. Fostering equitable access to livelihood assets within the Sukolilo community can enhance resilience and contribute to sustainable development by enabling all members to leverage their potential fully.

Importantly, the study reveals that **policy interventions often fail to address the uneven distribution of support**, such as in the case of fishing equipment or fuel aid, which were provided selectively and inequitably. This highlights a disconnect between government programs and grassroots realities, reinforcing the need for **inclusive policy co-design and participatory planning** in coastal development initiatives.

#### Limitations and Future Research

While this study offers in-depth insights into one specific coastal village, its findings may not be fully generalizable to all coastal communities in Indonesia. The research also primarily focuses on positive innovations, with limited exploration of failed or abandoned initiatives.

Future research could:

1. Conduct **comparative studies** across multiple coastal regions to identify patterns and variations in social innovation.
2. Investigate the **long-term sustainability** of grassroots innovations and their integration into formal governance.
3. Explore **youth and digital transformation** as emerging forces in community-based economic strategies.

## Conclusion

This study has highlighted how social innovation plays a critical role in managing community assets and addressing multidimensional poverty in the coastal area of Surabaya. Through the lens of the **Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA)**, the research identified disparities in access to key livelihood assets, with **social and financial capital** being the most underdeveloped, and **human capital** showing the greatest potential.

Despite structural constraints, the community of Sukolilo has demonstrated resilience and creativity in initiating **grassroots innovations**—such as informal saving cooperatives, local fish-processing kiosks, women-led product marketing, and youth-driven learning initiatives. These practices not

only supplement income but also foster community solidarity, improve skills, and increase autonomy over local resources.

The findings suggest that **asset-based and community-driven strategies are essential** for reducing poverty in urban coastal contexts. The practical application of this framework calls for development programs that:

- Strengthen community organizations and trust networks (social asset),
- Expand access to microfinance and cooperative funding (financial asset),
- Improve targeted training and education programs (human asset),
- Ensure equitable distribution and maintenance of infrastructure (physical asset),
- Support ecological awareness and sustainable fishing practices (natural asset).

For policy makers and development practitioners, the results point to the importance of **co-designing interventions with communities**, ensuring alignment between top-down support and bottom-up innovation.

#### *Implications for Future Research*

Further studies are needed to:

- Assess the **scalability and replicability** of these innovations in other coastal communities,
- Explore **long-term sustainability** and institutional integration of grassroots initiatives,
- Investigate the **role of digital tools and youth participation** in enhancing community assets.

In sum, this research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on **community empowerment through social innovation**, offering a practical and participatory framework for poverty reduction and sustainable development in marginalized coastal settings.

## Declarations

### Author Contribution Statement

All authors contributed equally to the conceptualization, research design, data collection in the coastal communities of Sukolilo, Surabaya, thematic analysis, manuscript drafting, and critical revisions. Each author has read and approved the final version for publication.

### Funding Statement

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### Data Availability Statement

The qualitative data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. However, due to ethical considerations and agreements with participants, interview transcripts and field notes are not publicly archived to protect respondent confidentiality.

### Declaration of Interests Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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