

Conflict Over The Use Of Public Space: A Case Study Of The Use Of Lembor Village Fields By The Merah Putih Village Cooperative

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ABSTRACT

Lembor Village, Brondong Subdistrict, Lamongan Regency, is facing a conflict over the use of public space resulting from the use of the village field as the site for the construction of the Merah Putih Village Cooperative, which has led to differing perspectives regarding the balance between social and economic functions. This study aims to understand community perspectives on changes in the function of public spaces and to examine the role of the Lembor Village government in managing the conflict. The research employs a qualitative approach using a case study method, with data collected through interviews and observations. Findings indicate that community views are diverse: some support the Red and White Village Cooperative due to its economic potential, while others oppose the reduction of the field's social functions. The conflicts that arise are latent and influenced by a lack of communication and community involvement in the early planning stages. The implications of this study point toward a participatory approach, open communication, and policies capable of balancing social and economic interests in the management of public spaces.

INTRODUCTION

Public space is a place that can be used by the entire community to participate in conditions of equality and mutual attention, and there is negotiation and dialogue. (Puspika Sari et al., 2020). Public spaces are accessible to the public collectively for various social, cultural, economic, and other activities. Public spaces play a crucial role in community life, serving as a venue for social interaction, enabling communication and fostering social relationships between members of the community (Kusumastuti & Kusuma, 2022: 94) . Furthermore, public spaces serve as a platform for the public to express collective interests and strengthen social solidarity within the community.

Cooperatives also play a vital role in economic development. They can build and develop the economic potential of their members and the community at large, improving economic and social well-being. Cooperatives also actively participate in efforts to improve

the quality of life for the community. They also strive to realize and develop a national economy that is a collaborative effort based on the principles of family and economic democracy. (Arifandy et al., 2020: 120). The role of cooperatives in Indonesia also has a significant impact, with the main goal of improving community welfare and achieving common goals.

Conflicts often arise from several parties that cause conflicts in the use of public spaces, in these conditions it can cause the use of public spaces to be reduced and will cause obstacles to community activities (Hasriyanti et al., 2023: 210) Conflicts in the use of public spaces generally do not occur suddenly, but are influenced by various factors such as differences in interests, perceptions and lack of communication between the parties involved. In this context, public spaces that should be shared often experience changes in function that are not fully accepted by the entire community. These changes can give rise to social conflict, especially when the community feels that their rights to public spaces are being reduced.

This situation demonstrates the importance of striking a balance between economic development and the sustainable social function of public spaces. Development undertaken without considering social aspects can negatively impact people's lives. A more participatory and inclusive approach to managing public spaces is essential to ensure that all policies are accepted by all parties and minimize the potential for conflict (Hasriyanti et al., 2023).

Wulandari (2023:89) argues that conflicts over spatial use are not triggered by overlapping activities, but rather by space capacity that is not commensurate with the use of the space. This condition indicates that public spaces are under pressure due to the high intensity of use and the forced use of space for other purposes that are fundamentally inconsistent with their original function.

The use of a field in Lembor Village by the Red and White Cooperative has become one of the local conflicts. The use of the Lembor Village field by the Red and White Cooperative can provide economic benefits to the community. However, on the other hand, it has created conflict within the community, as it would restrict the activities of people who frequently use the public facilities in the Lembor Village field.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to deeply understand the phenomenon of conflict over the use of public space that occurred in Lembor Village (Regmi, 2024) . The qualitative approach was chosen because this study focuses on the social dynamics that emerged in the community regarding the use of village fields by the Merah Putih village cooperative. Meanwhile, the case study method is used to be able to examine the phenomenon in depth in one location. The case study in this study uses Robert K. Yin's theory which states that case studies are an appropriate research strategy for questions of how and why a phenomenon in a real-life context, by utilizing various sources (Asysyauki & Widjaja, 2026).

The research was conducted in Lembor Village, Brondong District, Lamongan Regency, East Java Province, as the primary location of the conflict. The location was

selected based on real-world issues related to changes in the function of public spaces, which have given rise to conflicting interests. Informants included the Lembor Village community, Lembor youth, grocery store owners, and the Lembor Village government.

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews and observations. Interviews were conducted to gather information related to informants' perceptions and perspectives on the dynamics occurring in Lembor Village. Observations were conducted to directly observe field conditions and community activities in utilizing public spaces (Larasati et al., 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The conflict over the use of public space in Lembor Village demonstrates a complex social dynamic between economic interests and the social interests of the community. The village field, which previously served as a public space, providing a venue for sports, events requiring a large space, or simply playing (Riza, 2024: 691) , has now undergone a partial functional change to become the location for the construction of the Red and White Village Cooperative. This change has given rise to differing perceptions among community groups, particularly among youth, community leaders, grocery store owners, and the government in Lembor Village.

From the perspective of Lembor Village youth, this field is often used by youth to play and develop skills in playing soccer and also this village field is also used for events such as August celebrations and inter-village soccer matches, this is in line with the view (Agustin & Sukmana, 2023) that youth need space and access to productive resources in order to play a more active role in providing change for the village and in village social life. There are also access constraints that occur due to the process of building the red and white village cooperative, initially access to the field was quite wide and easy while now access is quite small and difficult.

The youth of Lembor Village continue to support the development of the Red and White Village Cooperative, but are disappointed by the perceived inappropriate location selection. (Sutrisna, 2023) emphasized that youth participation in village development should ideally include involvement in decision-making, including determining program locations to avoid sacrificing existing public spaces. The village field is also typically used for play, sports, and other community activities, not solely by youth.

Due to the inappropriate location chosen for the Red and White Village Cooperative, the youth of Lembor Village reacted strongly to the change in function of the field. They expressed anger and disappointment as the field, previously used for communal activities, was suddenly converted into a building deemed detrimental. However, to date, there has been no direct or open conflict regarding the use of the field. This is due to a lack of communication, with the village government failing to involve the youth in the initial socialization or discussion process. This situation indicates that the conflict has the potential to escalate if not handled effectively.

The solution offered by the village youth is to replace the field or provide new field land because it is the responsibility of the village government to provide public space for community activities and as a replacement for the field land used for the Red and White Village Cooperative.

Meanwhile, according to the views of the older community, the Lembor Village field functions as a public space used by the community. Before the establishment of the Red and White cooperative, the field was used intensively for various activities, such as soccer, school activities, to the August 17th ceremony and other village events. The field not only functions as a physical facility, but also as a social space that brings together people of various ages to interact and strengthen solidarity, this statement is the same as the opinion of (Maharani et al., 2024) . Both youth and the general public view the field as a shared asset that has high social value in village life.

Following the construction of the Red and White Village Cooperative in the field, significant changes in its use have occurred. The current state of the Red and White Village Cooperative has also raised objections, as it is considered inconsistent with the village field's original function as a public space. However, the community still sees potential economic benefits from the Red and White Village Cooperative, although they have not yet been realized. This situation indicates a perception that the community supports the economic goals but disagrees with the location of the building.

Table 1. Comparison of field conditions in Lembor Village before and after the construction of the red and white village cooperative

Aspect	Before the Cooperatives Existed	After the Cooperatives Existed
Main Function	Field as a multi-purpose public space	Part of the field land is used for the construction of the Red and White Village Cooperative
Area and Accessibility	Access is quite broad and can be reached by all people	Access is narrower and more limited due to development
Sports Activities	The field is used for soccer and inter-village matches.	Football sports activities no longer exist
Social and cultural activities	Becoming the center of independence ceremony activities, village events, drying rice, and so on.	Activities can still be carried out but are very limited
Economic function	There is no formal economic function, it is only used for social activities.	There is an economic function of the red and white village cooperative
Community involvement	Managed independently by youth from the youth	Decisions are taken from MUSDES and socialized to youth and the

	organization	community.
Conflict dynamics	There is no conflict, the field functions by mutual agreement.	A conflict arose but it did not lead to a demonstration, it was just a difference of opinion between the village government and the community.
Impact on grocery traders	Grocery traders operate without competition from formal village institutions	Concerns about competition with cooperatives
Social solidarity	The field becomes a space for interaction between communities	Social interaction is reduced due to public facilities being used for development.

From the perspective of community leaders, the Lembor Village field is very important because the field is widely used for community activities and the maintenance and management of the field are carried out by the youth of the youth organization, according to (Agustin & Sukmana, 2023) the youth of the youth organization must be involved in every activity process held by the village government. Actually, the selection of the location in the field was not appropriate, but because the center requested land measuring 20x30 meters and the village did not have other land, the government reluctantly sacrificed the field to be used as a red and white village cooperative. In village development planning, ideally the selection of infrastructure locations must consider the aspirations and needs of the community. (Kamaruddin et al., 2024) , emphasized that community participation in development needs to be fostered through the opening of forums that enable many people to participate directly in the decision-making process regarding development programs.

This conflict wasn't actually a major issue, leading to demonstrations, but it became a topic of conversation among residents who disagreed with the establishment of the Red and White Village Cooperative. Given that the facility is already under construction, the cooperative's future development remains uncertain. Community leaders do not intend to be prejudiced or jump to conclusions. However, the conflict should be resolved through collective deliberation, guided by the initial development objectives. One alternative that could be considered is providing facilities for youth, such as a mini-field. However, this plan is currently still in the planning stages by the village government. Limited funding and resources are obstacles, so its implementation cannot be carried out immediately but must be carried out through a gradual process.

The hope for the red and white village cooperative to run without disrupting the existing community economy, meaning that the red and white village cooperative is owned by the state, it is hoped that this cooperative will only sell subsidized goods such as fertilizer, LPG, and so on which are subsidized, not goods that can be sold by the community in grocery stores so as not to disrupt the community economy. For young people, an attitude of mutual understanding is needed regarding the current conditions, even though the village has quite a

large area of land but it does not meet the requirements for building a red and white village cooperative, so the solution that can be offered to young people is to build an agreement that accommodates all shared interests.



Figure 1. Field conditions in Lembor Village during the construction of the red and white village cooperative

The statement of the Head of Lembor Village related to the conflict that occurred because of the Red and White Village Cooperative, basically all village facilities are used for the public such as markets, soccer fields, volleyball courts are used freely for community activities. For the soccer field is primarily for playing soccer but also for other activities that require space or a large area such as for flag ceremonies, for drying rice and corn when it is harvest time, the important thing is not to disturb and damage the field and not eliminate its main function as a field, it can be used for other activities but must have permission and follow the applicable rules.

This red and white village cooperative is a national program that is *top down* from the center that must be implemented by the village, this *top down* nature has the potential to conflict with the cooperative principles that are based on democracy and independence (Ulfanora, 2025) . Previously the village did not receive detailed instructions regarding the establishment of this red and white village cooperative, suddenly through the TNI there was an order that the village must provide a thousand meters of village-owned land TKD (Tanah Khas Desa) within the settlement, the edge of the access road or the main road, many other villages are struggling to fulfill this requirement. The thousand square meter land was built as a 30 x 20 red and white village cooperative outlet, not including the terrace and parking lot, in Lembor Village, there are probably 2 places to be used as a place for the red and white village cooperative, namely on the soccer field and volleyball court, if on the volleyball court, automatically volleyball activities will be stopped because there is no place and the village will also not have a volleyball court anymore and also the volleyball court is usually used by

Muhammadiyah residents to perform Eid prayers, and the volleyball court is also used by the community to dry rice or corn when the harvest season arrives. If for a soccer field it will also result in the same thing as what happened with the volleyball court but because the soccer field is relatively large it can still be used for these activities but not optimally.

Decision This decision was taken from the Village Deliberation (MUSDES) , according to (Fenisa Fitri et al., 2025) MUSDES is a village development plan that ideally, is not only a ceremonial forum, but also a space for the community to convey aspirations, be involved in decision making, and contribute in formulating the direction of village development. In the MUSDES Lembor Village invited all stakeholders and football club administrators in making decisions on the use of the village or football field for the construction of the red and white village cooperative with the risk of limiting or cutting the football field for the construction of the red and white village cooperative.

This issue did not become a major conflict, merely disagreement and differing views among some members of the community regarding the development of the Red and White Village Cooperative. This is a normal occurrence in the community. Essentially, no one's interests should be neglected; all aspects must be able to function simultaneously. However, in practice, sectoral egos often emerge, with some parties prioritizing certain activities, such as sports, while tending to neglect economic interests. Conversely, economic actors sometimes view sports and social activities as less important. This perspective should not be the case. Balance is needed in managing various activities so that social, sports, economic, cultural, educational, and other activities can run harmoniously and support each other.

Problem solving can be achieved through constructive dialogue, discussion, and open communication. With this input, it is hoped that all issues and problems can be resolved amicably. Furthermore, there is appreciation for the active role of youth who demonstrate concern in sports, social affairs, and other activities. This is a crucial asset in encouraging the creation of inclusive and sustainable solutions.

Grocery vendors in Lembor Village expressed concerns about the Red and White Village Cooperative, saying it could disrupt their businesses. However, grocery vendors believe the community will continue to shop at the grocery store, as they can borrow money from the store, while the Red and White Village Cooperative likely won't.

On the other hand, this situation reflects the differences in systems and approaches between traditional businesses and cooperative institutions. If not managed properly, these differences could potentially lead to unhealthy competition. Therefore, efforts are needed to create synergy between grocery traders and the Red and White Village Cooperative so that both can operate side by side without harming each other and continue to support the community's economy sustainably .

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The conflict over the use of public space in Lembor Village arose due to the change in function of the village field to become the location for the development of the Red and White

Village Cooperative, which gave rise to differences in interests between social and economic aspects. The community basically supports the goal of economic development through cooperatives, but does not fully agree with the choice of location that reduces the field's function as a public space. The conflict that occurred did not develop into a major conflict, but could potentially become a major conflict due to the lack of communication and community involvement in the initial decision-making process. The village government has attempted to make decisions through village deliberations (MUSDES), but still faces limitations in land, funds, and resources in providing alternatives. Conflict resolution needs to be done through dialogue and open discussion, as well as efforts to provide solutions that can balance social interests without harming the community in Lembor Village.

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