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Lirememehe as an Adaptive Deliberative Institution: Conflict, Consensus, and Social Change among the Lete Nuwewang People

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study examines how Lirememehe enables the Lete Nuwewang community in Southwest Maluku to negotiate conflict, build consensus, and preserve solidarity as cultural practices change.

Methodology: A qualitative interpretive case study draws on semi-structured interviews with customary and community actors, observation, and documentation. Interview extracts are dated June–July 2026; the complete informant count is not documented. Data were interpreted through thematic comparison and source triangulation.

Main Findings: Lirememehe remains a forum for open debate oriented toward bula saja (collective agreement). Communication increasingly crosses face-to-face and digital settings; younger participants articulate new perspectives while customary legitimacy continues to matter.

Novelty/Originality of this study: The analysis identifies an adaptive deliberative institution in which changing participation and authority are negotiated without necessarily displacing the social value of consensus. This interpretation is specific to the documented case.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social change reshapes not only institutions and authority but also the social practices through which communities negotiate disagreement. The central question for this study is how a customary deliberative institution can remain legitimate while its participants, media and modes of decision-making change. Social transformation need not entail institutional disappearance; it may involve adaptation of practice while collective norms retain meaning [1]. In the island communities of Southwest Maluku, customary institutions coexist with formal village administration, migration, education and expanding communication networks. Studies of Kisar social stratification [2], Nuwewang fishing livelihoods [3], Sasi Laut governance in Nuwewang [4], the Rahak tradition [5], and Masela communal architecture [6] document the persistence of historically rooted norms under changing conditions. They provide important contextual evidence but do not directly explain how one deliberative mechanism converts disagreement into collective commitment.

Among the Lete Nuwewang people of Leti Island, Lirememehe provides a culturally recognized setting for discussing collective concerns. Its distinctive feature is that vigorous debate is not necessarily treated as a failure of social unity. Rather, disagreements are expected to move toward bula saja, locally understood as one voice or collective agreement. This makes Lirememehe an appropriate case for investigating the relationship between legitimate conflict and the reproduction of solidarity. Comparative studies of customary deliberation in South Nias and Indonesian village governance show that such arrangements can remain relevant while changing their participants and issues [7], [8].

Lirememehe is simultaneously a site of contention and a means of preventing prolonged antagonism. Arguments may expose different interests and generations may assess customary authority differently, but the local expectation of an agreed outcome places limits on the escalation of conflict. Studies of consensus-centered conflict resolution in Minangkabau and urban Indonesia suggest that culturally legitimate procedures can support negotiation across differences, although these findings cannot be generalized automatically to Lete Nuwewang [9], [10].

The social conditions surrounding Lirememehe have changed. Education and migration diversify the experiences of village members; formal administration adds procedural expectations; telephones and social media allow matters to be discussed before in-person encounters. Evidence from an Indonesian indigenous community demonstrates that elders and younger members may negotiate different uses of digital communication [11]; work on the Guarani similarly documents tensions between online participation and cultural continuity [12]. These comparisons frame possible mechanisms, not claims that the same digital effects have been measured in Nuwewang.

Intergenerational participation is especially consequential because customary legitimacy has often been associated with elders' experience and knowledge. The research material describes younger participants increasingly contributing perspectives acquired through education and outside contact. Related work on the Outer Baduy community highlights the relationship between digital mediation and identity negotiation [13], while evidence from Jalawastu shows how communal practices may be reworked amid social change [14]. These studies indicate why participation and authority must be examined together rather than assuming modernization simply replaces tradition.

The research gap becomes evident when the closest studies are considered individually. Rakuasa et al. [3] describe fishing livelihoods in Nuwewang, while Rakuasa et al. [4] examine Sasi Laut as a local marine-resource rule; neither addresses the deliberative sequence through which Lirememehe manages disagreement. Wattimury et al. [2] investigate stratification on nearby Kisar Island, and Steenbergen [15] analyzes the legitimacy and power of customary village leadership in Southeast Maluku, rather than consensus formation in Lete Nuwewang. Sunarti et al. [7] demonstrate the adaptation of Orahua deliberation in South Nias, including questions of unequal voice, and Utami et al. [8] examine conflict resolution among Baduy, Tengger, and Samin communities. These comparisons establish the continuing relevance of customary decision-making, but do not explain the particular role of bula saja within Lirememehe.

A further distinction concerns communication and generational change. Setia et al. [11] investigate cultural agency in digital adaptation among the Cireundeu, while Smailhodzic et al. [12] examine tensions surrounding social-media participation among the Guarani; neither directly traces how digitally circulated issues enter face-to-face customary deliberation in Lete Nuwewang. The empirical gap is thus the limited documented account of Lirememehe itself. The analytical gap is the absence, among these cited studies, of an integrated explanation linking the expression of conflict, the legitimacy of speakers, the achievement of bula saja, and the intergenerational reproduction of collective commitment within this specific institution. This study addresses both gaps by examining how changing participants and communication arrangements interact with the continuing expectation of a collectively binding decision.

Analytically, the study distinguishes changes in setting and membership from changes in substantive norms. Conflict is examined as a possible resource for clarifying interests, solidarity as the basis for accepting collective decisions, and social construction as the process through which the meaning of Lirememehe is transmitted and revised. Such a distinction is consistent with evidence that customary institutions may be both resilient and vulnerable when they encounter new administrative rules and power relations [16]-[18]. The study asks how social change influences the practices, actors, authority and functions of Lirememehe and how the Lete Nuwewang people negotiate the values of debate, consensus and solidarity under these conditions. These two questions place observable institutional change and the community's interpretation of its meaning within a common analytical frame. The objective is to explain the mechanisms through which Lirememehe remains a recognized process for managing disagreement while its social organization evolves. By examining transformations in participation, communication, decision-making and identity, the article contributes a context-specific account of adaptive deliberation in an island community rather than a universal model of customary governance.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The analytical framework combines four complementary perspectives. Sztompka identifies the structure and temporality of change; Coser examines when expressed conflict becomes socially productive; Durkheim identifies the solidaristic norms that make collective commitment possible; and Berger and Luckmann explain how those norms are institutionalized, transmitted and reinterpreted. These are sequential analytical questions, not four rival explanations of Lirememehe [1], [19]-[21]. Sztompka's theory is the primary lens for comparing former and present practices: who participates, where deliberation occurs, which actors hold authority, which issues are

discussed and how decisions circulate [1]. It prevents the analysis from equating a change in communication technology or procedure with the disappearance of a cultural institution. The Nuwewang findings are read as modifications to relations and practices, not as evidence of a quantified rate of cultural loss.

Institutional change involves interacting influences rather than a single force. Migration, formal education, employment and government administration reshape the resources available to participants. Comparative findings from Maluku customary leadership illustrate that legitimacy is continually negotiated in relation to contemporary institutions [15]; similarly, the study of Sasi authority highlights the risk that formal recognition need not guarantee effective customary power [17]. This distinction directs attention to who may speak and whose decisions are respected.

Coser's approach is used to interpret the observed pattern of heated yet bounded disagreement. Conflict can clarify interests, make grievances publicly discussable and renew relationships when participants accept procedures and limits [19]. The key empirical question is not whether debates occur, but how participants prevent those debates from becoming enduring hostility. Relevant Indonesian cases demonstrate the continued use of customary deliberation as a conflict-management mechanism [9], [22]. A debate does not automatically generate agreement. Coser's analysis is therefore connected to Durkheim's: the acceptance of bula saja depends on shared obligations beyond the immediate winning or losing of arguments. Studies of customary conflict resolution elsewhere in Indonesia show both the promise of deliberative agreement and the influence of unequal authority [8], [7]. Thus, the study assesses consensus as a socially organized outcome rather than as evidence that every participant had identical preferences.

Durkheim's perspective locates the binding force of consensus in collective consciousness, shared customary obligations and interdependence [20]. Kinship and community identity provide moral boundaries within which disagreement can be voiced. The analytical function of solidarity is to explain why a participant might accept the community's decision even after arguing against it. Evidence on the cultural transmission of customary knowledge in Cerekang illustrates how shared norms may be reproduced through multiple social pathways [23]. Solidarity may change in form without vanishing. Education, migration and occupational diversity can produce greater differentiation, while the community continues to expect that public disagreement ends in an accepted decision. In the Nuwewang context, the analytical emphasis is therefore on the practical work of sustaining connection across generations. Literature on collective action and community governance indicates that durable institutions depend on locally legitimate rules, interaction and capacity to adapt [24], [25].

Berger and Luckmann clarify the cultural production of these rules through externalization, objectivation and internalization [21]. Repeated deliberative practices establish expectations about speaking, listening and accepting an outcome. Younger participants can learn these expectations while also questioning who should chair meetings or how information should circulate. This lens helps explain how a practice can be reconstructed rather than either unchanged or abandoned. Reinterpretation becomes visible when participants distinguish the core purpose of collective agreement from inherited meeting conventions. Insights from traditional-knowledge research emphasize that continuity frequently involves adaptive transmission [26], [27]; digitally mediated documentation can help cultural transmission but may not preserve all embodied meanings [28]. Such work supplies comparative concepts, not direct evidence about the frequency of Lirememehe meetings.

The four theories are brought together in one causal-interpretive sequence: social change alters actors and practices (Sztompka); changed interaction creates or redistributes disagreements (Coser); shared norms orient those disagreements toward an acceptable collective outcome (Durkheim); and repeated acceptance, teaching and reinterpretation reproduce the institution (Berger and Luckmann). This sequence is used to connect the five empirical themes, rather than discussing theorists in isolation. The contribution is specifically to the study of institutional adaptation through deliberation. Previous studies of customary governance and conflict show that legitimacy is neither wholly fixed nor wholly replaced by state rules [16], [18]. Lirememehe allows closer analysis of the transition from open debate to bula saja under changing participation and communication arrangements. The claim concerns this observed case; its applicability elsewhere is a question for comparison, not a presupposition. The resulting analytical proposition is that the continuity of Lirememehe rests less on immutable meeting procedures than on the continued recognition of an authorized way of transforming differences into a collectively binding decision. The proposition is assessed through participants' descriptions of past and present practices, their accounts of dispute management and the meanings they attribute to shared decisions.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1. Research Type and Setting

The study employed a qualitative, descriptive-interpretive case-study design to examine Lirememehe as a socially situated institution rather than a set of variables to be statistically measured. This choice allows attention to participants' interpretations of authority, disagreement, consensus and cultural continuity [29]-[31]. The unit of analysis was the practice and meaning of Lirememehe within the Lete Nuwewang community. Research took place in Lete Nuwewang, Leti District, Southwest Maluku Regency. The locality was selected because Lirememehe is

embedded in communal deliberation there. Interview quotations in the research record are dated from 27 June to 12 July 2026. These dates document the interview evidence, not necessarily the full period of observation or documentary collection. The analytical comparison is retrospective, distinguishing remembered earlier practices from the circumstances described as current; it is not a longitudinal panel study.

3.2. Research Subjects and Selection Criteria

Participants were selected purposively for their direct experience or contextual knowledge of customary deliberation; recruitment was also described as using referrals from initial participants. Relevant roles were customary leaders, village representatives, community and religious figures, elders, women and younger residents. This strategy seeks contrasting institutional and generational viewpoints rather than statistical representation [32]. The documented interview extracts identify several customary leaders, community figures, a religious representative, and younger participants, but no complete participant roster or verified total number of informants is available. No numerical sample size or claim of demonstrated data saturation is made here [33].

3.3. Instruments and Data Collection

Data collection was described as using a semi-structured interview guide, observation notes, and documentary review. The interview topics included the history and meaning of Lirememehe, matters prompting deliberation, opportunities to speak, management of arguments, the authority of elders, bula saja, and perceived intergenerational change. Table 1 organizes the reported instruments and evidence domains; it does not imply that a separately validated checklist or a complete item-by-item instrument archive was available [34]. Observation was described as attending to speaking turns, expressions of disagreement, customary involvement, and movement toward agreement, with village-government and kinship relations providing context. Documentary sources were described as village and customary records, photographs, local historical material, and available meeting notes. The exact document titles, dates, and quantities, as well as interview durations, recording modes, and specific observation dates, were not provided. These details should be checked against the original field records rather than inferred.

Table 1. Research instruments and evidence domains

Instrument	Focus / key items	Evidence source and analytical purpose
Semi-structured interview guide	Meaning and history of Lirememehe; meeting issues; speaking rights; handling conflict; elder authority; bula saja; generational change	Accounts from customary leaders, village/community and religious representatives, elders, and younger community members; comparison of institutional meanings
Observation notes	Meeting setting; participation and speaking turns; expressions of disagreement; customary roles; movement toward collective agreement	Reported interactional and village-context observations; interpretation of participation, authority and conflict boundaries
Document review	Customary and village records; available meeting notes; photographs; local historical materials	Contextual corroboration of practices, procedures and institutional change, where documentation was available

3.4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Analysis followed an interactive process of data condensation, data display and conclusion verification [35]. Interview accounts, observational descriptions and documents were first organized by source and subject, then coded for perceived continuity, changing participants, new communication media, disputed authority, conflict articulation, bula saja and collective identity. Related codes were compared and consolidated into five interpretive themes. Thematic organization was informed by the logic of transparent code-to-theme development, not by a claim of software-generated or quantitatively validated categories [36], [37]. The interpretation compared accounts attributed to elders, community leaders and younger participants, searching for convergence as well as differences over authority, media and acceptable outcomes. The four theories were then applied to the emerging themes: Sztompka for institutional change, Coser for the social role of disagreement, Durkheim for the binding norms of consensus, and Berger and Luckmann for the reproduction of meaning. This sequence moves from empirical description to interpretation and then checks whether the theoretical reading remains consistent with the reported examples.

3.5. Trustworthiness and Research Ethics

The research account reports source triangulation (comparison among participant roles), methodological triangulation (interviews considered alongside observation and documents), and selective checking of

interpretations with participants. These procedures should be described as reported rather than treated as independently auditable guarantees; the source does not include a triangulation log or member-checking record. Credibility is strengthened when contradictory accounts are retained and interpretive decisions are traceable [38]-[40]. The research account describes explaining the study purpose, voluntary participation, respecting restricted customary knowledge and taking precautions with potentially sensitive statements. For confidentiality, the interview excerpts identify speakers by broad social roles and does not add personal identifiers. The available records do not specify whether consent was documented orally or in writing, whether institutional ethics approval was obtained, or how recordings were stored; these cannot be asserted without evidence and should be completed from the researcher's documentation.

3.6. Research Procedure

The reported research sequence moved from selection of a culturally relevant site and knowledgeable participants to interviewing, contextual observation, documentary comparison, coding, and interpretive synthesis. In the absence of a dated fieldwork log, Figure 1 represents the analytical workflow described in the reported methods rather than a verified month-by-month chronology [35], [37].

Site and participant selection →	**Interviews, observation, documents →**	**Organize sources and code →**	**Compare accounts and develop themes →**	**Theory-guided synthesis and verification**

Figure 1. Research procedure and qualitative analysis flowchart

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study findings are organized into five linked themes: continuity amid procedural change; conflict within accepted boundaries; bula saja as collective commitment; changing authority and youth participation; and identity reconstruction. Quotations are retained from the submitted text. To preserve confidentiality, interview evidence is presented by participant role and month, without names, initials, or ages. The analysis does not imply that every Nuwewang resident shares identical experiences.

4.1. Lirememehe Persists, but Its Forms of Practice Have Changed

The first finding demonstrates a pattern of both continuity and change in the practice of Lirememehe. For the older generation, Lirememehe is not merely an occasion for people to gather and discuss a particular issue but a customary mechanism endowed with rules, values, and social authority. In the past, customary leaders and individuals considered knowledgeable about the Lete way of life occupied particularly important positions. Opinions were expressed openly and could lead to prolonged debate, yet the community remained bound by the obligation to reach a collective decision.

Changes are evident in contemporary practices of Lirememehe. Community meetings have become more flexible and, in certain circumstances, intersect with the meeting mechanisms of village government and other social organizations. Communication prior to deliberation is also no longer conducted entirely through face-to-face interaction. Mobile phones and digital communication technologies allow information concerning issues to be discussed to circulate before community members meet in person. Thus, technological and institutional changes have not necessarily eliminated Lirememehe but have influenced the ways in which the community practices it. As customary leaders stated:

> *"In the past, when there was an issue concerning the common interest, the elders would sit together and talk until they reached a decision. Even though they argued with one another, they would still arrive at a unanimous decision, and everyone would abide by it. Today, the way people gather has changed. People can communicate first by telephone, but if the issue is important, they still have to gather and discuss it together. This is a good practice, so we must continue to preserve it." (Interviews with customary leaders, June 2026, Lete Nuwewang).*

The account suggests that Lirememehe is maintained by adapting its procedural forms, rather than by repeating earlier meetings in an unchanged manner. Communication before gatherings can speed the circulation of issues, but it can also distribute agenda-setting power to those with phones, connectivity or stronger social networks. The manuscript documents reported use of telephone calls and messaging; it does not provide systematic digital-use measurements. Similar tensions between cultural norms and online participation have been documented in other indigenous settings [11], [12]. Through Sztompka's framework, this is a change in institutional relations and channels of participation, not proof that deliberative legitimacy has disappeared [1].

4.2. Debate and Conflict Remain Important Characteristics of Lirememehe

For the Lete Nuwewang people, differences of opinion and debate constitute important characteristics of Lirememehe. Deliberation does not always take place in an atmosphere free from tension. On the contrary, the community provides space for parties with different viewpoints to defend their positions. Under certain circumstances, debates may become intense because each party believes that its reasons, experiences, or interests deserve to be heard. Interestingly, the community does not necessarily perceive such debates as evidence of damaged social relationships. Instead, differences are understood as part of the process of reaching a decision that can be collectively accepted. The social boundary lies in the community's ability to distinguish disagreement over the issue under discussion from damage to kinship relations. Conflict within Lirememehe, therefore, has cultural boundaries: people may disagree, but such differences should not destroy their relationships as fellow members of the Lete community.

> *"In Lirememehe, everyone is allowed to have a different opinion. Sometimes the discussion can become intense because each person defends their own position. However, once a decision has been reached, those differences must not be carried forward and turned into hostility. Everyone in Lete Nuwewang has known this since long ago as one of the characteristics of Lirememehe." (Interviews with community leaders, July 2026, Lete Nuwewang).*

This testimony frames disagreement as a legitimate stage of community deliberation, while also insisting that personal antagonism should not persist after a collective decision. In Coser's terms, the potentially integrative function of conflict rests on collectively accepted boundaries and procedures [19]. Similar work on customary mediation illustrates how culturally recognized settings can facilitate movement from grievance to agreement [9] [10]. The evidence here supports the presence of such a norm; it does not establish that every conflict in the community is successfully resolved.

At the same time, the informants' statement that differences "must not be carried forward and turned into hostility" after a decision has been reached demonstrates the strong orientation toward consensus and social solidarity within Lirememehe. Collective decisions mark the point at which disputes are brought to an end while simultaneously restoring social relationships among those who previously held different views. The fact that this principle has long been recognized as a characteristic of Lirememehe indicates that managing conflict toward consensus has been internalized as a collective value among the Lete Nuwewang people. Thus, Lirememehe functions not only as a space for deliberation but also as a cultural mechanism that transforms conflict into consensus and prevents differences from developing into social division.

4.3. The Principle of Bula Saja as a Mechanism for Restoring Social Unity

The third and one of the most prominent findings is the persistence of the principle of bula saja, which the community understands as the achievement of "one voice" or collective agreement following a process of debate. This principle demonstrates that Lirememehe not only provides community members with the freedom to speak but also imposes a social responsibility to bring differences to an end through a collective decision. In practice, bula saja does not mean that all participants share the same opinion from the beginning. Unity is achieved precisely after differences of opinion have been expressed. Therefore, consensus within Lirememehe is the outcome of a process of social negotiation. Those whose opinions are not fully accommodated are nevertheless expected to respect the final decision because it has become a collective decision. This is reflected in the following interview:

> *"People may express different views, but in the end there must be bula saja, meaning that once a decision has been reached, it is no longer the decision of one person. It has become a collective decision, and everyone must respect it." (Interviews with community and religious representatives, June 2026, Lete Nuwewang).*

The principle of bula saja makes agreement more than a procedural end point: participants describe a transition from competing individual positions to an outcome represented as belonging to the community. A Durkheimian interpretation draws attention to the shared obligations that make acceptance possible even after strong disagreement [20]. This reading also raises an empirical question: agreement expressed in a meeting should not automatically be equated with equal influence over the decision. Future observations should attend to dissent, silence and the authority to declare that consensus has been reached.

The informants' statement that a decision is "no longer the decision of one person" demonstrates a transformation in the status of the decision from an individual position into a collective agreement possessing social legitimacy. Once bula saja has been achieved, every member of the community has a moral obligation to

respect and abide by the decision, including those who previously held different opinions. This indicates that Lirememehe functions not only as a decision-making mechanism but also as a means of building consensus, strengthening solidarity, and restoring social unity following disagreement, thereby placing collective interests above individual interests.

4.4. Shifting Authority and the Increasing Participation of Younger Generations

The fourth finding demonstrates changes in the structure of actors and social authority within Lirememehe. In the past, the knowledge and authority of elders and customary leaders constituted particularly strong sources of legitimacy. Younger generations were more likely to listen, follow, and learn from decisions made by those considered to possess greater experience and knowledge of customary traditions. Developments in education, migration, employment, information technology, and interactions with the outside world have subsequently generated changes. Younger generations have gained access to new sources of knowledge and have become more confident in expressing their views on community issues. In certain circumstances, formal education and experiences outside the region provide younger people with knowledge and perspectives that increasingly lead their opinions to be taken into consideration in collective discussions. As one older community leader explained:

> *"In the past, young people mostly listened to the elders. Now they go to school, attend university, work outside the village, and learn many things. When they return, they also contribute their opinions. We continue to respect our customs, but the views of young people today also need to be heard." (Interview with an elder and community representative, June 2026, Lete Nuwewang).*

The perspectives of younger community members further illustrate this process of change:

> *"We still respect our elders and customary traditions, but circumstances today are different. There are new things that young people may know more about, especially technology, education, or matters outside the village. Therefore, we want to contribute our ideas as well, and we sincerely want our village to progress." (Interviews with community participants discussing younger generations, July 2026, Lete Nuwewang).*

Reported shifts in youth participation complicate the idea that traditional authority is either maintained intact or displaced. Elders continue to be recognized as custodians of customary knowledge, while younger members bring educational and technological resources into discussions. This may distribute opportunities to frame problems more widely, but it may also generate tension between experiential and formalized knowledge. Studies of customary deliberative arrangements in South Nias and digital identity negotiations among indigenous groups offer comparative support for this interpretation [7], [13]. The source material does not establish that younger participants exercise equal decision-making power in every setting.

The perspectives of younger community figures further reinforce this transformation. Younger generations continue to recognize elders and customary traditions as important elements of community life while simultaneously seeking greater opportunities to contribute their ideas, particularly in relation to technology, education, and issues connected to life outside the village. Their desire for participation is not intended to replace the authority of older generations but to contribute to the advancement of the village. Thus, intergenerational change within Lirememehe demonstrates an ongoing negotiation between traditional authority and new forms of knowledge, in which respect for customary traditions is maintained while younger generations increasingly participate in deliberative and decision-making processes within the Lete Nuwewang community.

4.5. The Reconstruction of Lirememehe's Meaning: From Customary Tradition to a Space for Maintaining Collective Identity

The fifth finding demonstrates that social change has not only altered how Lirememehe is practiced but has also encouraged a reconstruction of its meaning. Some community members no longer regard Lirememehe solely as a mechanism for resolving problems inherited from their ancestors. In the context of societal change, Lirememehe is also understood as part of Lete identity, distinguishing the way in which the community reaches collective decisions from social practices found elsewhere. This awareness becomes increasingly important as more community members pursue education outside the region, migrate, use digital technologies, and interact with other cultures. Such mobility enables community members to compare their own traditions with patterns of social life encountered outside the community. Under these circumstances, change may produce two tendencies: certain older practices may become less frequently used, while at the same time a renewed awareness emerges regarding the importance of preserving the core values of Lirememehe.

> *"Life has indeed changed now. Many of the younger generation leave the village to study and work. However, our way of resolving problems by sitting together and talking until we reach one voice must not disappear, because it is part of the life of the Lete Nuwewang people." (Interview with a customary and community representative, July 2026, Lete Nuwewang).*

The interviews indicate that the community distinguishes preserving the normative value of collective dialogue from preserving every inherited form. Lirememehe can thus serve as a recognizable marker of belonging even as meeting spaces and participant expectations change. Berger and Luckmann's institutionalization perspective helps explain why recurrent narration and practice matter for the transmission of communal identity [21]; studies of cultural transmission in Cerekang and of intangible-heritage digitization likewise show that transmission is enacted through social relations and mediated forms rather than static storage alone [23], [28]. A similar perspective was expressed by an informant from the younger generation:

> *"In our view, maintaining customary tradition does not mean that everything must be done exactly as it was in the past. What matters is that the values of respecting others, listening to different opinions, and seeking collective decisions remain. The way these values are practiced can be adjusted to present circumstances." (Interview with a community participant discussing generational change, July 2026, Lete Nuwewang).*

The interview indicates that the younger generation of Lete Nuwewang does not view the continuity of customary traditions as requiring the preservation of every form and method of practice exactly as they existed in the past. For them, what matters most is maintaining the substantive values of Lirememehe, including mutual respect, a willingness to listen to different opinions, and an orientation toward collective decision-making. This perspective demonstrates a process of cultural adaptation and reinterpretation, in which changes in methods or mechanisms of practice can be accepted as long as they do not eliminate the fundamental values that constitute the identity of Lirememehe. Social change, therefore, does not necessarily lead to the disappearance of tradition but can encourage communities to reconstruct their cultural practices so that they remain relevant to contemporary life while preserving the cultural substance transmitted across generations.

Across the five themes, the evidence supports a qualified synthesis: procedural flexibility enables continued discussion; norms of bounded argument legitimize disagreement; bula saja supplies a recognized expectation of collective commitment; younger members introduce new knowledge into customary settings; and the meaning of the institution is reproduced through shared narratives. The findings accord with studies of adaptive customary governance [15], [16], the social resilience of Jalawastu [14], and negotiated participation in digital settings [12]. They also caution against assuming a frictionless transition, since formal state authority and unequal local power can restrict effective customary decision-making [17].

Theoretically, Sztompka specifies which practices change; Coser explains the productive potential of openly managed disagreement; Durkheim clarifies why participants can commit to a shared decision; and Berger and Luckmann identify how these expectations are reproduced across generations [1], [19]-[21]. The practical implication is to support inclusive deliberative procedures that preserve trusted customary mediation while allowing younger and geographically dispersed members to contribute. The key limitation is the absence, in the available documentation, of a comprehensive informant roster, observation chronology, primary-data audit trail and independent records of meeting outcomes. This single-community interpretive study therefore offers contextual explanation, not proof of general effectiveness or causal effects of digital technology.

5. CONCLUSION

Lirememehe remains a recognized deliberative practice among the Lete Nuwewang people despite changes in meeting procedures, communication, participants and customary authority. The answer to the first research question is that social change has altered the way deliberation is organized without necessarily displacing the practice itself. The answer to the second is that disagreement continues to be framed through culturally recognized expectations of bula saja, which redirect competing positions toward collective commitment. The findings show an adaptive relationship between procedural flexibility and normative continuity. The theoretical contribution is to connect four mechanisms within the same case: the restructuring of practice (social change), the articulation of differences (conflict), the social binding of decisions (solidarity) and the repeated production of legitimacy (social construction). These findings warrant a cautious interpretation: recognized consensus does not by itself prove equal participation, and complete fieldwork documentation was unavailable for independent verification. Local institutions could strengthen their continuity by making deliberative outcomes clearer, encouraging youth and women's participation, and retaining accessible records without exposing restricted customary knowledge. Further research should compare Lirememehe meetings across issues and generations,

observe how dissent is handled after decisions, assess the effects of messaging platforms on participation, and examine interactions between customary and formal village authorities. A comparative design across island communities, supported by dated observations, participant-role records and systematically documented verification, would test the transferability of this case-based interpretation.

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