

Art as the Medium for Cultural Preservation Across Cultures

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ABSTRACT

Humans have their own unique way to adapt with nature. Rural people place themselves as a part of nature. However modern people place themselves as a different entity from nature and tend to dominate nature, so natural resources exploitation is inevitable. This purpose of this article is to find a concept that the intention of art with cultural asset can be used as a medium for ecological preservation. The author uses qualitative method with critical and creative analytical and studying the theory to solve ecological preservation problem without rule beliefs of mythical people out. This article finding is a concept that art with various medium, technique, and functionality can be used as medium to deliver messages about preservation of nature while maintaining cultural value. Cultures are essentially dynamic and easily change, but with the existence of art, cultural value is still biased in arts. Therefore art can be used as a medium to deliver message about nature preservation from people cultures.

Keywords: *arts, cultural ecology, social environment, culture*

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has various culture based on geographic condition related to where people live. The people have various ways to adapt with nature. How they adapt forms culture. One of a culture that influence community is belief. People's beliefs to the power outside their self is inherited to the next generation will forms spiritual culture, so there are spiritual activities conducted. Spiritual activities has impact to the nature sustainability, because people believe nature's power is gods who required honor and protection. It's because people's limitations in defining natural power scientifically, so it comes up with gods and mythic concept (Peursen, 1988).

When the times have turned into modern and many urban people have a modern mindset, and the introduction of religious knowledge in the midst of society, the sacredness of a myth is fading. The reason is that they can define every natural phenomenon scientifically, so that they are no longer attached to the tales of the gods and myths. Humans in the ontological thought have declared themselves as a separate substance from nature, no longer as part and whole of nature. Humans as a substance that can stand alone, have their own foundation, and do not need to rely on other substances. This flow of substantialism also appears in an individualistic attitude (Peursen, 1988).

Individualistic attitudes tend to think of themselves rather than other substances, one of which is ecology, so that nature becomes a victim of the individualistic attitude of ontological humans. For the sake of the economy, humans exploit nature, in order to make the work of humans more effective and efficient, using materials and equipment that have the potential to destroy nature. Industrial development and all jobs that are required to be fast can increase the potential for damage to nature. Based on data from 2018 to 2019 Indonesia's deforestation has increased by 5.2%, but reforestation can be increased in 2019 (LHK, 2020). Based on these data, it shows the success of the government in maintaining the existence of Indonesian forests in the midst of the high demand for land for industrial communities. Based on data from the Indonesian Plastic Industry Association (INAPLAS) and the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), it shows that plastic waste in Indonesia reaches 64 million tons per year. A total of 3.2 million tons of which are plastic waste dumped into the sea. This makes fish contain microplastics, even though Indonesia is the number 2 contributor to fish in Europe and the number 4 contributor to fish in the world (Indonesia.go.id, 2019). Fish that contain microplastics are certainly not healthy for human consumption, so humans need to maintain the ecology for themselves.

Local people who believe myth are people who have a big potential to protect nature, but they can't make modern people believe their beliefs. As happened around Bamboo Forest Lumajang, East Java. Inside that

bamboo forest, there's a water springs which the fish never been taken by local people, because they believe that there's a uncanny fish which only bone. That kind of fish is believed as the leader and protector for other fishes. If one of the fish is taken, it will bring wrath from the supernatural fish and bring disaster upon the one who catch the fish. Likewise with bamboo plants in the Bamboo Forest, there is a myth that people who cut bamboo and their families will be hit by a disaster (Wulansari & Nur, 2018). Such myths cannot be accepted by modern society, so it needs a different way to communicate their preservation intentions to modern society. One way that can be done is through art. This article aims to discover the concept that one of the goals of works of art with cultural capital can be used as a medium for preserving ecology. So that local people can still use their beliefs and culture in maintaining the ecology that can be translated into a work of art. The artworks that carry the message of ecological preservation are expected to be able to remind modern society of the importance of preserving ecology..

2. METHOD

The author uses the literature study method by searching from various sources and then analyzed critically and creatively. Sources are taken from books, scientific articles, and several previous research papers. The author also examines theories related to ecology, art and culture to solve ecological problems without neglecting the cultural beliefs of local communities. In this paper, social theory that is related to human behavior and society is interdisciplinary with ecology, thus forming the discipline of environmental sociology. This social science discipline uses a human and environmental approach. The study of the influence of the environment on humans, and vice versa through the perspective of environmental sociology is a relevant part of the social science discourse (Lapka et al., 2012). In this paper, art studies are used as a medium of intercultural communication, so the author uses social analysis and studies of artwork semiotics.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Local Community Role in Ecological Preservation

Local people are native people who have lived for generations in an area. They tend to maintain the culture passed down from their ancestors. These cultures and beliefs regulate their behavior, one of which is how they maintain their ecology. Although sometimes their main goal is not to maintain the

ecology, but to believe in myths and tales can have a positive impact on the ecology in which they live.

One of the cultures that is still practiced by local people in Java is the ruwatan tradition. Ruwatan is a ritual performed by Javanese society which aims to free humans from calamities and cleanse from all the sins and mistakes they have committed. The people who need to be in ruwatan are children with special positions in their families and people who are considered sinners. They are believed to be humans who fall prey to Batara Kala. In the puppet show, Batara Kala is the son of Batara Guru who was born because of lust that he cannot control. Batara Kala is depicted as a giant figure who asks Batara Guru for food. Then Batara Guru allowed him to eat humans whose existence was unlucky in the world, which in Javanese is called *wong sukerto* (Relin, 2015). In this ritual, there is usually a puppet show playing a Murwakala or Sudamala character (Darmoko, 2002).

Apart from being done to purify someone, ruwatan is also used to treat a place or an area. Ruwatan is also related to Javanese cosmology, which believes that every move has the potential to contain dangers, so it needs to be tweaked. Javanese people usually do ruwatan regularly at certain times, namely 1 Suro according to the Javanese calendar or 1 Muharam according to the Islamic calendar (Kleden & Probonegoro, 2008). Ruwatan, which has routine time like this, is usually used for environmental maintenance, such as the village clean tradition or village ruwatan. This tradition is a means of respecting the village's Dhanyang or Pundhen. So, in its implementation, choosing a place that is considered sacred, there are puppet shows with the selected puppeteer who must meet certain requirements, and there are various kinds of offerings (Relin, 2015).

The sacred places chosen to perform the rituals can be in the form of Pundhen or natural locations such as waterfalls, mountains, rivers, seas, reservoirs, and other natural locations that are considered sacred by local residents. They will also keep the sacred place clean and authentic. Usually they still use myths and tales to protect the place, so that everyone who visits does not commit disgraceful deeds that can damage the ecology. This shows that local people have a cosmic and magical concept that tries to balance human existence and the universe.

3.2. Modern Community Role in Ecological Preservation

There are differences in maintaining the ecology between modern society and local people who tend to have a mythic mindset. Local people prefer to use fairy tales and myths to regulate human behavior in interacting with the universe, modern society uses logical, systematic thinking and rational knowledge.

In the middle of high energy needs to run industries, industries need to think wisely in utilizing energy with industrial ecological theory. This theory helps to design industrial production systems so that they can use natural resources appropriately and reduce emissions that have the potential to pollute the environment, thus realizing resource conservation and environmentally friendly business (Yongwei et al., 2011). The government needs to take control in efforts to protect the ecology by making wise regulations, effective law enforcement combined with monitoring, sustainable community involvement and development of livelihood skills are the most viable solutions to the conservation approach.

Educational institutions can also play an important role in educating the public from an early age on the importance of maintaining ecology for human survival in the long term. Providing knowledge to modern society about the consequences that arise if there is no balance and harmony between natural components can be used as a preventive effort. To build ecological awareness in the field of education is to implement education based on Ecopedagogy. Ecopedagogy is oriented towards achieving a complete understanding of the nature of the relationship between humans and nature, so this has implications for the growth of critical awareness and the building of the character of students (Yunansah & Herlambang, 2017). The Ecology-based Nature Education Project in Kemaliye, Turkey has also had a positive impact on the outlook on life of its students. Through field observation, walking, camping, and adventure activities can increase effective interaction with the environment, become more sensitive and their behavior towards nature as well as student social interactions can be better (Durmus & Yopicioglu, 2015).

Although modern society makes various efforts to maintain ecology, not all modern societies are willing to apply it. In contrast to traditional societies, preserving the ecology is part of their beliefs. Beliefs in traditional societies are not easy to change and lost because its existence is supported by the awareness that these institutions concern respect, self-respect, and the identity of the supporting communities (Firmansyah & Putrisari, 2017). Meanwhile, modern society needs motivation from itself. This motivation is easily changed and eliminated by other interests, so that traditional societies have a greater tendency to maintain ecology than modern societies.

3.3. Artworks as Means of Ecological Preservation

The national priorities in the 2015 - 2019 Medium Term Development Plan (RPJM) include energy, tourism and industrial areas (Amanat, 2019). To support the success of this development, the government and

society need existing natural resources. Not a few places that are sacred to the local community or places that have myths were transformed as energy sources, industrial areas, and managed as tourist attractions. Myths that function as regulators of human behavior to protect the ecology are no longer effective in regulating the behavior of modern society. Thus, artworks that have culture as capital are a medium to communicate messages in order to protect the ecology.

Through arts, artists try to deliver their messages through symbols in various media to art connoisseurs. Art work is a product of the culture of a society, so that the work of art itself contains values that apply to that society. Through artworks that have culture as capital, artists can provide ecological messages, for example songs that have lyrics asking not to cut trees, fable theater that has stories about life in the forest, dances that symbolize the importance of clean water for life, works of art two-dimensional or three-dimensional appearance that invites to minimize plastic waste, and so on. Artworks with cultural capital will be more easily accepted by traditional and modern communities in villages and cities.

The high public interest in cultural tourism and natural tourism can be used by local people to present artworks with messages to protect the ecology. There are many myths and legends in society that can be used as the basis for determining the development of new tourist sites (Amanat, 2019). So the myths and legends that exist in the community are the main attraction in the tourism sector. Tourism will be more attractive if it is also presented with unique artworks with a distinctive cultural touch of a society, as well as a campaign for ecological literacy.

4. CONCLUSION

Local communities have a primitive mindset, where humans are part of the ecology. Their belief has the potential to maintain the balance of life with the natural environment around them, so that nature is preserved. Meanwhile, modern society no longer believes in myths. They use scientific and logical means in maintaining ecology. So, when modern society visits areas that are sacred to the surrounding community, myths are no longer considered sacred to modern society. Local people can use art with their cultural capital to campaign ecological messages to modern society.

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