



# Virtual Culture as the Survival of Art Life in Pandemic Times Within the Community Scope in West Sumatra

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## ABSTRACT

Virtual culture seems to have become a common thing for the world community at this time. This is inseparable from the times and technological advances. So that community members can communicate well between individuals with individuals, individuals with groups and between one group and another. Art life as a series that forms the culture of society must be able to survive and always show its existence, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic that is engulfing the world community. This can be shown by the communities in West Sumatra who adapt by utilizing technology media (cyberspace) to form cross-art and even cross-sector developments.

**Keywords:** *Virtual Cultur, Survival, Art Life, Community*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The convergence of mass media technology is the result of a long process of adaptation of communicative resources with evolutionary changes in every moment of the history of communication media. With the new media, it becomes (plurally) an extension of traditional media in cyberspace, which allows the public to access information on various digital devices. In other words, it is a cultural virtualization of human reality as a result of the migration of physical space to virtual space. It is governed by certain codes, signs and social relations. As is the case in today's era, there are instant ways of communicating in the form of virtual interactions and enabling quick access to information sources. Thus, humans are no longer just senders of information, but also producers, co-workers, providers and so on.

New technologies that are rapidly developing help to "connect" people from different cultures into one virtual space, which was unthinkable by humans decades ago. In this gigantic network of relationships known as the convergence of mass media technology, humans absorb each other's beliefs, customs, values, laws and even

habits as a cultural heritage that is preserved by physical dynamics into cyberspace in constant metamorphosis.

Yasraf Amir Piliang states that the world of cyberspace is a world in which it displays an existence through an "image ontology", which is assumed to be a painting of an image to get an authentic "existential" meaning, at the inter-individual level, community development. Virtual cyberspace has created virtual social relations (Piliang, 2012). In connection with this statement, McQuail quotes (Lindlof and Schatzer, 1998) as saying that virtual communities are formed because there are people who have similar interests and often interact with each other. This virtual community can be formed from various social networking platforms, such as; *Zoom Meeting, Youtube, Facebook, Instagram* and so on.

In the current era of disruption 4.0, massive technological advances have made major changes that have changed various living arrangements. Coupled with the current situation of the pandemic, at the same time making changes to the order of communication practices, which were initially carried out in the form of direct/physical interactions, turned into virtual

interactions. It is a fact that mass communication using technology-based technical media has connected the provider with the recipient. So, in the current pandemic conditions, humans can connect to the same link/URL and become a virtual culture.

## 2. DISCUSSION

We can realize that the impact of the ongoing pandemic has changed various aspects of life. One of the aspects that have felt the most impact of this pandemic is the art life. The life of art as a series that forms the culture of society inevitably must be able to survive and always show its face (existence). The space for art movement which initially can occur in one territory and is witnessed directly or physically has now been replaced by virtual spaces as a solution for the survival and existence of artistic life. As also expressed by Prof. DR. Tjetjep Rohendi Rohidi, M.A that culture can be likened to a coin whose one side functions as a guide to life, and the other side functions as an adaptive strategy that constantly adapts itself to the changes that occur (Rohidi, 2020). In terms and conditions that occur at this time of course regarding the strategy for the continuity of art life during the pandemic.



**Figure 1.** Performing Arts performed before the Pandemic



**Figure 2.** Performing Arts during the Pandemic

Janet Wolff in her book *The Social Production of Art* states that the life of art is a discourse about everything that can show that what is called art can live and develop if there are artists, works of art and the art community so that art is a social product (Wolff, 1993). And also in fact art life is synchronically in "space" and "time". "Art" which is discussed in the context of a "performing art" specifically (synchronic) in the current pandemic condition requires "media" or "means" that are considered effective to convey the face and meaning of

"art" itself. With the help of technology (internet), artists as art activists can interact in a group or community. A community usually consists of people who share the same interests and goals. Creating interactions and relationships in a virtual frame to be conveyed to a wider audience/ audience/ community.



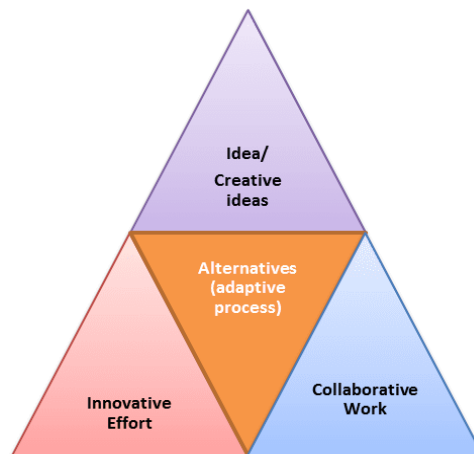
**Figure 3.** Art Performances performed virtually on Youtube.



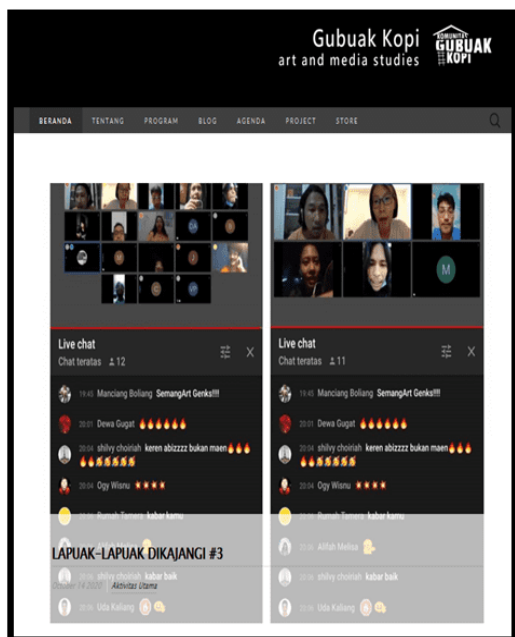
**Figure 4.** Virtual Art Show on Instagram.

Symbolic interactionist thinking (Herbert Blumer, 1969) emphasizes the importance of giving meaning in interpreting the behaviour given in response to a particular stimulus, for this reason, this approach emphasizes the importance of studying symbols in human interaction. Thus it will be able to understand something that is the background, process and prospect of the stimulus and response that occurs. Furthermore, Ritzer tries to formulate the basic principles of symbolic interactionist theory, as follows: First, human beings can think, and that thinking ability can be fulfilled in social interaction. Second, in social interaction, humans learn the meaning of meaning and the symbols are following the ability to think. Third, the meaning of a meaning or symbols resulting from the ability to think will affect a person in such a way in social interaction. Fourth, as a result of the thought process, it will cause a person to interact with other people, and besides that, they are also able to examine which interactions are beneficial or detrimental. Fifth, this combination of action and interaction is the basis for a person to form a group and socialize (Ritzer, 1988).

Artists as art activists and performing arts communities (groups) need "stimuli" to be able to continue to maintain their existence. Because this is inseparable from the things that underlie it. The first is about sustainability which depends on the life and professionalism of art activists as a personal identity. The second concerns the sustainability and existence that carries the characteristics of a particular community/ community group as its social identity. Humans have the freedom, responsibility and opportunity to optimize all of their abilities to form that identity (personal and social). Thus, social identity becomes part of the individual's self-concept that comes from his knowledge while in his community by intentionally internalizing values, participating, and developing a sense of care to achieve common goals (Afif, 2015: 2).



**Figure 5.** Pyramid Diagram (Productive Stimulus in time Pandemic)



**Figure 5.** The interaction carried out by one of the Communities using the Zoom Meeting media which is integrated into Youtube

The "stimuli" referred to cannot be separated from creative ideas, innovative efforts made, and collaborative work to create alternatives as an adaptive process that can be realized together. New media (internet) as an effective communication medium at this time, opens opportunities as well as challenges for art activists to maintain their existence and for the continuity of artistic life that is needed in the community. With the existence of communities with individuals in them as art activists, it becomes a place to create these "stimuli".

The product of an adaptive process by utilizing technology and the internet gives birth to virtual platforms/pages that can be accessed by anyone, anytime and anywhere. So that it attracts the attention of activists and other art observers to participate and enliven the events that are designed through cyberspace links.

Events organized by communities are usually held in the form of festivals. At first, it moved from one field of performing arts, with the role of technology (internet) making it grow to cross the arts and even cross sectors. In cross-arts, such as in line with the holding of art exhibitions in the form of audio and visual, historical and related to local culture. Meanwhile, across sectors, it is in line with art education, creative economy to tourist destinations, cultural tourism and culinary tourism and so on. Community groups in West Sumatra in particular produce and distribute media literacy knowledge through creative activities, organize collaborations between professionals (artists, writers, and researchers) and citizens, develop local media and archiving systems, and build alternative spaces for cultural awareness development.

Seeing the efforts that have been made by the movement of communities in maintaining the stability of artistic life. So it can be used as guidelines and adaptive strategies that are useful and need to be mastered by both individuals and groups. The guidelines and adaptive strategies that need to be mastered consist of tools (4 ware);

#### 1) Hardware

The existence of the ability to understand/operate hardware technology products. Such as Computers, Photo and Video Cameras, Audio Recorders and so on.

## 2) Software

The existence of the ability to understand the working system of applications or features that exist in technology/computer product devices. Such as browser software, audiovisual design software, computer network software, LMS and so on.

## 3) Brainware

The existence of the ability to organize and develop ways of thinking to get optimal results. Such as: Thinking systematically, creatively, innovatively, collaborating knowledge possessed, interacting, and collaborating.

## 4) Soulware

The existence of awareness and ability to straighten intentions, and interests, to achieve the desired goal. Such as: motivating yourself to be productive, as well as motivating individuals in the surrounding environment.

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## 3. CONCLUSION

Diachronically, the convergence of mass media technology is the result of a long process of adaptation of communicative resources with evolutionary changes in every moment of the history of communication media. While synchronically, art life as an event during a pandemic raises guidelines and adaptive strategies that are realized through the virtual world and become a virtual culture. So the manifestation of virtual culture is the convergence of the art world.

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