Local Art Communities as Cultural Sphere for Preventing Radicalism

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Abstract: This article aims to describe the strategic contribution of the art community as a cultural space to foster the creativity of young people and dynamize the artistic process which can be an alternative to prevent the growth of radicalism in Indonesia. Radicalism is a quite worrying issue for the Indonesian people because it may damage the building of multicultural nationality as mandated by the constitution. The government has given significant funds to finance programs to prevent radicalism. Unfortunately, the central government has not yet placed a cultural approach as a strategic part of the program. This article is based on a two-year research conducted in Banyuwangi and Ponorogo. The data were collected through in depth interview and participant observation in a number of art communities on these two regions. I will describe the role and strategic contribution of the art community that accommodates young people in preventing the growth of radicalism through cultural creativity. Cultural creativity, which includes routine training, creation of works, and art performances, can be a creative force that accustoms young members of the art community to the imagination and productive activities for life. Of course, artistic creativity is in contrast to the teachings of agents of radicalism who want confrontational resistance to state institutions that are deemed incompatible with their understanding. Thus, the Indonesian government should pay more attention to the efforts of young people to foster arts communities in the area.

Keywords: Banyuwangi, Ponorogo, cultural creativity, cultural sphere, radicalism

Introduction

Radicalism, terrorism, and intolerance are serious problems faced by the Indonesian people. The fact that revolutionary and terrorist cells are still being discovered in several regions is evidence that this nation must not be careless in anticipating the growth of radicalism in the midst of society and also among government officials. It is not surprising that the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) is given full authority to take preventative and counter-measures against radicalism and terrorism. As a state institution, BNPT takes two approaches, namely hard power and soft power (BNPT, 2019). The hard power approach involves armed operations to counter the threat of terrorist groups. Meanwhile, soft power is done by preparing a study to find the roots of radicalism and terrorism and creating a set of laws and policies that can touch the source of the problem. This approach is appropriate because radicalism and terrorism are not short-term, but long-term issues which cannot be solved only by the use of weapons.

In the academic sphere, some literatures emphasize the importance of prevention and countermeasures in dealing with radicalism and terrorism. Jazuli (2016) explains that the hard approach is a legal action and enforcement against terrorist perpetrators. On the other hand, the soft approach is guidance towards the community (to anticipate the potential for radicalism), terrorist and ex-terrorist prisoners by carrying out efforts to deradicalize both socially and individually. This approach is in line with proactive law enforcement strategies to take preventive actions. Related to soft power/approach in handling terrorism and radicalism, BNPT has also carried out creative programs in various fields. Collaboration with universities and other educational institutions is enhanced to provide discourse and knowledge for the students. BNPT also collaborates with YouTubers to create creative and intelligent content to prevent the growth

of radicalism, fundamentalism, and terrorism. No less impressive, BNPT also conducts studies on essential contributions of local wisdom, including the expression of arts and culture, for preventive goals. The local knowledge is on the top priority followed by welfare, freedom, public trust, justice, defense, and security (Bisnis.com, 2019).

My two-year research in Banyuwangi and Ponorogo indicates that local culture can play a vital role in preventing radicalism because the diversity of traditions can avoid active dogmatic campaigns carried out by its advocates. Adolescents and young people who are not accustomed to imagining and expressing the diverse cultures of their communities, tend to be more easily exposed to radical thoughts and movements because they do not have enough comparisons to counter racist discourses and dogmas. Of course, to maintain the preservation of local culture takes the existence of artists and the art community where children, adolescents, and young people practice developing arts. Regarding efforts to prevent radicalism, I argue that the ethnicity-based arts community in a region can contribute significantly to efforts to counter radicalism and terrorism. This paper describes theoretical assumptions related to:

(1) the contribution of the art community to prevent the dangers of radicalism, intolerant thoughts actions, and terrorism;

(2) what activities in the art community can be carried out to make these goals successful;

(3) how the government should take a position to the contribution of the art community in designing cultural policies.

Conceptual Framework and Methodology

Radicalism and Cultural Way

Schmid (2013: 8) claims that radicalism is an understanding that supports political change based on the belief that the status quo cannot be accepted, while at the same time, a fundamentally different alternative emerges positioned as something that can radically bring about change. Besides, radicalism is also understood as a means that can bring radical solutions to the transformation of systems for government and society that can be in the form of non-violent and democratic movements (through persuasion and reform) as well as through violent and non-democratic movements (through coercion and revolution). In its development, since the terror movement began to bloom in the era of the 2000s, understanding of radicalism has also changed. The extraordinary threat of terror from time to time experienced by people in many countries, gave rise to new meanings of radicalism which was positioned as a source for the birth of radicalization and terrorism, especially those based on certain political or religious beliefs. Radicalization became a term that began to flourish in several European countries and the US.

Furthermore, Schmid (2013: 12) explains several definitions of radicalism that are used in several countries. The Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET) defines radicalism as a process in which a person accepts the use of non-democratic means and violence, including terrorism, to achieve specific political/ideological goals. The Netherlands General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) interpreted radicalization as an effort and or active support for significant changes in society that could jeopardize the rule of constitutional law by involving non-democratic methods that could damage the democratic legal order. According to the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS), radicalization is the process of adopting an extremist belief system, as a method, including the will to use, support, or facilitate violence, as a method for influencing social change. The Swedish Security Service (Säpo) explains radicalization as a process that activates ideological or religious activity to introduce radical change to society as

well as processes that allow individuals or groups to use, promote, or support violence for political purposes.

From the above notions, a simple understanding can be made that radicalism is a thought or ideology that seeks to radically change the social and political order of society by means of violence. Radicalism can lead to radicalization, which can use certain political or religious bases to achieve the ideals of groups in making fundamental changes in society. Radicalism and radicalization have given birth to terrorism, which has fatal consequences in the form of victims of millions of people in various parts of the world. This condition must be taken seriously by the Indonesian government. Since early 2000, terrorists has killed many Indonesian citizens or foreign nationals who are in the territory of this country. In addition, it is a fact that currently, the spread of religious-based radicalism in Indonesia is still active.

Quantitatively, Indonesian security forces are indeed able to reduce the movement of terrorists. However, there are still political problems that hinder the systematic efforts to eradicate radicalism and terrorism. One of them is the strong assumption that the eradication of terrorists has an agenda to weaken the Islamic world in which Indonesia is one of them (Smith, 2005). Second, the active mobilization of hatred and intolerance to realize the political interests of certain groups or political figures as seen in the case of the Jakarta governor election in 2016 (Mietzner & Muhtadi, 2018; Lim, 2017). Third, the active mobilization of certain religious populism that positions religion-based awareness and popular sentiments as the primary way to realize specific political goals (Hadiz, 2018, 2013, 2008; Hadiz & Robison, 2012).

Cultural spheres in the local area can be an alternative to prevent the spread of radicalism. Conceptually, the cultural sphere is a space for expression in which all citizens can participate to carry out shared agendas in an atmosphere of harmony and fun, with the aim of negotiating and continuing to develop the wealth of tradition. All citizens have the right to provide input related to conservation and development and the right to be directly involved, both actively and passively, in activities carried out together, regardless of their social status. This concept modifies the concept of public space offered by Harbermas (1989). Simply, public sphere, in the understanding of Harbermas, is an area in social life where all individuals gather together to discuss and identify social problems. Within the scope of local communities, many places are used as cultural spaces, such as village hallsterrain, art communit, and others.

For this reason, appropriate strategies and mechanisms are needed to prevent the development of radicalism and radicalization in Indonesia. In fact, Indonesian society has sufficient social and cultural capital to prevent radicalism and radicalization. Bonds, solidarity, and socio-cultural cohesion that are still relatively good in the midst of society can be important capital.

The conceptual framework above is the basis for analyzing primary data from the research I conducted in Banyuwangi and Ponorogo , districts in East Java, with a focus on cultural policy to empower the arts community and prevent radicalism. Primary data come from participatory observations and in-depth interviews with actors in the art community of the two districts. Also, I analyze secondary data from online media related to the issues to strengthen the concepts offered. The analysis is directed at uncovering the critical contribution of the arts community as a cultural space that plays a role in cultivating aesthetic creativity. Imagination and construction of thinking oriented to the beauty and creativity of the work encourage members of the art community to reject radical notions that aim to destroy the building of harmony, solidarity, and nationality. In the final part, I propose the government to make cultural policies that place the local arts community as a strategic part in the growth of creativity and national awareness to prevent radicalism.

Results and Discussion

To be creative in cooperation and tolerance

In Banyuwangi, there are two categories of *sanggar* (art communities). First, *sanggar* that only conducts activities when they get job performances. Usually, this kind of art community manages ethnic-based folk art such as *gandrung* (social dance), *janger* (traditional drama), *jaranan*, and *reyog*. Secondly, the *sanggar* functioning as a training center for dance and music-based folk art. This *sanggar* is managed in a modern way with a systematic training system. I, first of all, analyze the creative activities carried out in the art community training its members in dance and music skills. Art community is a cultural space where the board and members have the opportunity and equality to gain the ability and knowledge of art. In addition, in this place, they can learn to develop creativity through the creation of dance creations that collaborate ethnic and other arts.

One of the main activities in the art community in Banyuwangi is routine training, where the members are accompanied by one or several trainers practicing basic dance movements. The basic dance movement aims to provide members with basic skills and knowledge about the basics of choreography so that they have the creative provision to practice dance creations. This basic training is not only done once, but it is repeatedly until the members understand. Although it looks ordinary and has no value other than the dance learning process as in other places, from this basic training, the members get some useful experience. First, they can feel joy and happiness despite having to take care of energy. The joy and happiness arise because they can meet and train with peers and trainers. They also get the knowledge that they may never have. This simple experience will bring positive memories about the beauty of the art process. Second, learning of repeatedly basic dance movements can train members to develop an attitude of patience that is important for the process of self-formation and creation of works, both in art galleries and in other places. Third, they will get aesthetic lessons from an early age to position beauty as an orientation to produce works of art. This love of beauty can keep them from destructive desires. It is this experience and aesthetic knowledge that makes them not easily influenced by radical dogmas because they are accustomed to understanding and practicing aesthetics.

The practice for dance creations based on local/ethnic arts is more complex because it requires not only patience but also a creative mind to produce work. Dwi Agus Cahyono, Chairperson of *Kuwung Wetan* Art Community, Rejoagung Village, Srono District, Banyuwangi, claims that not all art communities in Banyuwani can produce creations based on ethnic art for several reasons. First, the lack of aesthetic knowledge related to choreography and understanding of local culture as context. Many trainers can make a combination of drama and dance. But not many can make their work based on cultural strength. It is not in accordance with the historical and cultural context. Second, the lack of willingness to learn from many parties about the process of creating a work and the richness of its cultural meaning. Third, the lack of courage to go out of the comfort zone. Often the managers of the community are satisfied that they are able to present their work in front of government officials.

The complexity of the creation of the work is not just an arena to measure the ability and knowledge of the board and members of the community. More than that, they are required to imagine freely, but still consider the complexity of history and local culture. With this understanding, the work they produce certainly can have aesthetic wealth and strength as well as having a particular message delivered to the public because it correlates with specific problems in society. Regular discussions between the committee and members to solve problems and find innovative ideas during the creation process can enrich their perspectives on "communalism" as

well as "imagination and praxis between subjects." This understanding will contribute to the development of constructive thinking about the critical role of collaboration with many parties. This understanding is important because without having to be trapped in the pedagogical model, the management and members enter into the dimension of communalism and cooperation that respects and appreciates the contributions of all parties. The spirit to continue to appreciate the positive contributions of others, no matter how small it is, will teach an attitude of "tolerance" in human relations.

The ability to produce local culture-based dance combined with modern knowledge and skills indicates the courage to engage in a dialogue between civilizations. Accepting cultural values and aesthetic forms that are different from the culture of the artists is certainly not an easy task. Moreover, they work in an area where standard problems can be a debate and a source of conflict. When artists dare to take the path of dialogue and dialectics between civilizations they will get used to building "creative bridges" with principles that local is not inferior to global ones. The principle of bringing together non-Banyuwangi local dance movements into a dance based on local Banyuwangi arts will certainly familiarize young artists with various differences in the living life or in undergoing creative creation. One valuable lesson is the work that combines various elements without losing the local elements is the fruit of openness and tolerance in terms of thought and culture.

The success of creating a work is extra happiness for the coaches and members of the communities. Moreover, the work is the result of articulate and creative exploration of local culture. Local culture is a marker of the identity of a community that has historical similarities, characteristics, and solidarity. One of the strengths of local culture is its power to foster and tie solidarity between citizens in the dynamic motion of modern civilization. Works created from the richness and diversity of local culture can be a strategic-creative offer to members of the public, especially the younger generation so that they always foster pride in communal identity. Pride is a constructive one because it does not stop of being proud, but develops it through creation that can be displayed publicly. Public performances, at least, can make citizens proud of their local culture through a love of aesthetics that results from locality exploration. Local culture, in such conditions, can be transformed by using modern formulas such as discipline in creation, openness to dialectics, and the format of works whose duration is limited. Creative pride is what will make them think thousand times to accept the ideology or teachings that want to destroy it, as conveyed by radicals.

Proud events that strengthen solidarity

A simple example of this conception is the pride and love of Ponorogo citizens when witnessing the 2019 Reyog Ponorogo National Festival (from now on abbreviated FNRP), on 26-30 August 2019. Thousands of Ponorogo residents and neighboring districts such as Madiun, Trenggalek, Pacitan, and Wonogori. Their presence showed that the *reyog*-based creative work which was packaged in the form of a festival with a spectacular stage was able to attract the attention of citizens to come. There are still many people, who like *reyog* art, can inhibit and prevent the influence of radical ideologies that are harmful to the community at the local level. When the propagators of radicalism present, they will recall all the proud cultural values and practices to be used as filters and shields. This was reinforced by communalism between residents who were both *reyog* lovers. They are willing to go down from the hilly area around Ponorogo to the town square by taking a truck or riding motorcycles. Ponorogo Square is a cultural space where they can greet friends and watch *reyog* performances that become their communal and

cultural identity. The presence of 36 *reyog* communities from Ponorogo and districts/cities in Indonesia is a binder of cultural solidarity that continues to develop dynamically and can be a force to reduce the growth of radical ideology. Citizens with egalitarian characteristics already have a strong cultural orientation so that when new ideological discourses appear to be extreme and tend to dispel beliefs in local culture they will be rejected communally.

Apart from the excitement of the *reyog* festival, which is not less interesting to uncover is the seriousness and commitment of young artists in the direction of senior artists to practice. Of course, one or twoweeks preparation is not enough. Ideally, the training of an art community that will compete in FNRP is a year. It is conceivable how members must arrange schedules, prepare physical strength, and mature their minds before deciding to join the creative process in their respective communities. It is not an easy matter. All processes, from basic *reyog* training to choreographic composition, must be followed with high discipline. Members whose attendance at the training are inconsistent will be evaluated and replaced by other members. This mechanism is not just a way of discipline, but a way to foster a passion for loving local culture seriously, not just for fun. The seriousness in practice will strengthen solidarity among young artists and appreciate all creative processes. Not surprisingly, the majority of *reyog* artists who have been active in the art community continue to show their solidarity and love for this art. For those who love *reyog*, it is a process that has been rooted, truly integrated in mind.

A similar event of community's pride in the work of young artists in the art community is the *Gandrung Sewu* Festival, conducted on 12 October 2019, at Boom Beach, Banyuwangi. A thousand dancers from *sanggar* and representatives of Banyuwangi junior and senior and high schools gathered at the beach. Even though the heat was intense, they were still eager to present a colossal dance based on *gandrung* art, one of Banyuwangi's cultural identities. Although the program was initiated by the district government, the trainers and musicians involved in the preparation for the implementation were young artists under the leadership of Dwi Agus Cahyono. This spectacular event which has been held since 2012, aside from being a tourist attraction favored by domestic and foreign tourists, is also an event to continue to transform the infatuated art into the contemporary life of the community. Despite being a mass dance that fascinates the audience, the trainers retain the grip of the infatuated show, but it has been modified for public performances. Awareness to come to the arena shows that Banyuwangi residents can receive mass infatuation, and they still have communal ties that have been maintained until now.

In addition, the young generation involved in the *Gandrung Sewu* Festival gained valuable experience, from the training process to the performance. Although less than a year to prepare, teen dancers will learn about discipline and knowledge about Gandrung dance. The bond of togetherness in the process of rehearsal to the show will be a value that continues to be remembered as good in undergoing a cultural process. In addition, they will maintain that love and solidarity as cultural capital in living life so that it will not be easily influenced by radical discourse and ideology. Such a process emphasizes that the prevention of radicalism does not have to go through campaigns and seminars, but cultural processes that can strengthen the perspective of young people about creativity and local cultural richness.

Preparing cultural policy

The government should think of mechanisms to manage the essential contributions of the art community in preventing radicalism. Seminars and campaigns are essential, but ignoring the participation of the art communities will cause harm. Why? Art communities have been places to develop artistic and cultural creativity. Children, adolescents, and young people get art training

and feel the beauty of the creative process. These will fill their minds and hearts with a love of aesthetic work, not a lover of radical action. Thus the prevention of radicalism can be done in delightful ways. The central and local governments should make cultural policies that not only have the dimension of cultural development and empowerment but can also prevent the development of radical thoughts and actions.

Many experts warn that governments should make serious calculations before making cultural policies. Bennet (2007) argues that governmentality contributes to the success of policy because it can create programs that are tailored to the needs of the public. Good governmentality will produce policies that can encourage the formation of subjects of the affected communities. McGuigan (1996, 2003,2004) emphasizes that cultural policy does indeed bring up the concept of regulation and control, but its meaning does not have to be limited to operational and administrative actions by government officials. A good cultural policy is the one that is able to combine various aspects, such as technological growth, the managerial ability of government, and how the power of policy spreads discursively - rather than coercively - to cultural actors and society at large amidst social, economic and political changes.

Conclusion

The cultural policy can be used to develop culture effectively as long as the government has clear concepts to implement. This cultural policy is not only related to the preservation and development of culture, but also to prevent radicalism and terrorism. By using the integration model, the cultural policy can be designed to foster and strengthen the creativity of young people so that they will have enough knowledge and skills that will shape their minds. In addition to being ready to be a generation that is ready to respond to the challenges of the times with creativity, they will also continue to develop a love of local culture. Thus when faced with the offer of ideas and acts of radicalism, they already have the cultural strength to reject it.

The cases from Banyuwangi and Ponorogo discussed above indicate how local art communities enable the members for not only learning about the culture but also preventing radicalism. Government attention on art communities both these two regions need to improve. In this way radicalism and terrorism can be decreased or even stopped.

Acknowledgments

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