Youth Creativity: Participation in City Identity Building in Surakarta

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Abstract: Surakarta has a long history as an 'old city' which is built in a kingdom concept, including its political considerations, sociology strategies, economics, and culture orientation. All of the cultural products which are born and developed in Surakarta reflects the civilization level and ideology maturity of the society’s cultural journey. This research is aimed at identifying the information and creative ideas which put forward historical aspect and traditional culture as a strategic basis, so that a new comprehensive study on the youth involvement in supporting the identity and cultural city image building will be found. The object of this research were creativity, art, and traditional culture. Meanwhile, the subject of this research were the youth/youngsters at Sangkrah and Joyoraharjan, Surakarta. The method used was under the Research and Development (R&D) approach in the following steps: 1) initial research and collecting information, 2) planning, 3) preliminary development of product. The data were collected using in-depth interviews, participant observations, document analysis, and focus group discussion. The results show that the potentials which can be developed are the physical room, art, skill, and literacy. This research produces a developmental model draft.

Keywords: creativity, youth, history, culture

Introduction

Surakarta has been a part of the cultural and historical journey of an ‘old city’ derived from Keraton Surakarta Hadiningrat (Surakarta Hadiningrat Kingdom). Based on its history, Surakarta was no longer one group’s will to form a social habitat, rather was built based on a concept of a kingdom including its political considerations, sociology strategies, economics, and culture orientation. It means that all of the cultural products which are born and developed in it reflects its civilization and cultural ideology maturity (Budi, 2017: 13).

Based on that history, the Surakarta Government in bringing out development tries to implement populist and cultural policies to preserve the cultural values of Surakarta. Therefore, a cultural development needs to be oriented to certain values and spirits, so that it can create cultured and civilized society. That policy is mentioned in the vision and mission that put forward cultural aspects as the basis, characteristic, and identity of the development by improving the human resource quality (Yulianto, 2009: 5).

In relation to the development of the human resources, Surakarta has a potential number of productive teenager residents. Teenagers between 15 – 24 years old reach up to 91,393, with education level ranging between high school – university up to 83,002 or 16% out of the total number (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2017). Productive teenagers can be managed and their creativity can be developed under the local culture values/ Surakarta tradition. As the young generation, they need to get involve in the sustainable cultural development, considering that they are the heirs who will continue to lead the future of Surakarta.

Teenagers have specific characteristics in developing social interaction and getting trust from the adults. In terms of social interaction and thinking, they often have group activities for having a discussion, looking for one vision, thinking, and supports from the same society. Their
existence is shown through social, art, and cultural activities for expressing themselves and their creativity (Wahida, 2016: 50).

Teenagers in Surakarta who join several groups of karang taruna or community sharing the same interest have shown their creativity potentials, which indirectly have supported the city development. It was recorded that in some villages, such as: 1) Sangkrah; having Rumah Baca Teratai which educates and develops the teenagers’ creativities through art and cultural approach, 2) Joyoraharjan; having Karang Taruna Anjaya that turns their village into creative village through mural, go-green movement, kali bersih (clean river), and lesung music art, 3) Joho; having karang taruna that manages trash bank and develops skills in making handicrafts from recycled things (Buku Dokumentasi Art Educare#8, 2017: 30). Various creative and art expression activities of them, can also be seen every Saturday night and Sunday morning along Slamet Riyadi main road and Ngarso Puro (in front of Mangkunegaran palace). They do several creative activities, such as: music performance, dance, BMX/lowrider attraction, skateboarding, or fashion show and many motorcycle modification models. Those activities are initiated and facilitated by their own groups (Wahida, 2016: 10). If their potentials are managed, developed, and integrated to the government programs, especially in development of human resources, those will support the creative economic growth which affects community autonomy and competitiveness.

Based on that background this research is important to be carried out, so that a new model for developing teenagers’ creativity that is based on the local culture values can trigger their critical awareness and build their involvement and role in preserving and developing the culture in Surakarta

**Method**

Generally, this research will be carried out in Surakarta. Specifically, the research and art creation processes will be carried out in two villages (kampung): Sangkrah and Joyoraharjan. The two partners have productive teenagers who creatively develop their village images. Therefore, their involvement is still relevant to the theme proposed in this research.

This research applies qualitative approach that focuses on the creativity development of the teenagers based on local values in Surakarta. The data will be collected through direct observation in order to understand the object being observed (Spradley, 1980: 53 – 58). Besides, there will be interview, document analysis, and focus group discussion to collect more data. The analysis will be done simultaneously in stages using interactive model of analysis which consist of: data reduction, data presentation, and verification or conclusion (Miles and Huberman, 1984: 18).

**Results and Discussion**

Sangkrah is located in Sangkrah regency, Pasar Kliwon. This village was initially known as the thief village. That stigma has been changed by one of the community member, Danny Setiawan. Inviting the other members, Danny tried to make a movement through running a library. Now, Sangkrah is known for its library which is used as a media for developing the community’s potentials, especially the children and teenagers. At first, the people was troubled in looking for a representative room for the library. After having a discussion, then it was decided that they will use a security building in that village (pos ronda). That building was basically a small room sized 1.5 x 2.5 meter. For that purpose, they renovated the building so that it can be used as a reading room.
The act of building a library was responded by many circles. The information was spread through social media had gain more sympathy and help in the form of free books sent from around the nation. Finally, **Teratai** library was officially opened on January 17, 2014. The target of that library was to discover and develop the children and teenagers’ potentials. For the children, the focus of the development was their talent, interest, also character and mental building; while the target for the teenagers was to develop their life skill.

As the time goes by, those activities involved more people and the old room was no longer sufficient so that they had to work along the street in front of Sekolah Dasar Negeri Dadapsari Solo (an elementary school) until 2015. Because of the room necessity, with the help of some partners they agreed to rent a house to be used as the more representative library in 2016. That house is now still used as the place for the community’s activities.

The training was carried out at Teratai library for free. For teenagers who were joining the training will be given the facilities and directly guided by the professional instructors. Besides the skill training, they will also learn about business. The trainings that had been carried out were silk-screen printing, carving, make-up, drawing, airbrush painting, and so on.

Joyoraharjan is one of most populated village in Purwodiningratn Jebres, Surakarta, which width is 2.4 km². This village was initially quite neglected, yet because of the people’s solidarity in rebuilding their environment, the village has become interesting to be observed. The people’s enthusiasm in planning the environment is very great. They together clean up the river which flow in their village and create parks around the banks to make it looked more beautiful. Some of the walls in the alleys were creatively touched by mural that was painted together.

Joyorharjan has an old art which had become a part of long history called **Gejluk Lesung**. ‘Lesung’ is a tool used to open up the rice grain made of ship-shaped wood, the rice is pounded by using a long wooden beater called ‘alu’. Gejluk Lesung is played just like when people use lesung to pound rice with rhythmical strokes. Usually, this rhythm of the lesung is played to accompany traditional songs. There is no limit for the number of people playing in Gejluk Lesung, but in the average there will be 5 to 7 persons at once. This art is still performed at special events, especially when the karang taruna is holding annual event such as in celebrating the Independence Day.

The effort in raising literary culture was done by opening a small library that can be accessed by any member of the community, especially the young members. Initially, it was a very small room with small amount of book collection, but now Anjaya library has more book collections gathered from donation.

Building a city image greatly related to the village role in the process. The community has great potential in building it. The relatively collective life makes the people are able to work together in doing the activities. In this case, teenagers’ participation becomes very important because they are in productive age period.

Teenagers are in a certain phase of human development having a specific quality and character, with certain right, roles, responsibilities, potentials, and needs. One nation’s development mostly depends on the youth who are the agent of change. Therefore, re-thinking and re-inventing in nation character building need to be there for the youth to become national and patriotic in order to find back its national identity (Moerdiyanto, 2011: 2).

The results of the research in those two villages show that the eagerness to do an activity has grown among the youth. They participated horizontally, in which the community may have ideas to be realized together, or in order to do activities together (Effendi in Zakaria, 2011). With the involvement of many parties in different activities carried out by the teenagers, it
covers several aspects mentioned by Davis (in Sastropoetro, 1988: 6): mind participation, force, skill, equipment, and money.

Seen from the educative activities that had been carried out which had strong connection to the local cultural root, it can be said that teenagers have interest toward their root culture. They tried to articulate the tradition passed down to them as part of their recent identity. It goes along with the slogan of Surakarta that carries the spirit of Java.

Based on the analysis and discussion among the teenagers, there are needs to optimize the empowerment. Therefore, a basis community needs to be founded to gather all the creative ideas uttered by the teenagers and to develop their talents responsibly. This youth center functions to manage assistance and development of the teenagers though providing facilities and programs. The other functions of this center are: 1) to provide the facilities for the youth activities such as in mental-spiritual field, science, skill, and recreation; 2) to provide programs in order to foster and channel inspiration, desire, talent, and interest into positive activities; 3) to hold partnership with other organizations in relation to the assistance and development of the youth.

This youth center has several rooms, including: exhibition room, discussion room, and a room for keeping the products before selling. Furthermore, this center runs some programs, such as: the creativity improvement program by creating a group of teenagers who are interested in art and craft, a program for literacy by having discussions about the latest issues, social events for rearranging the public space in the village including cleanliness, health and aesthetic. They also set a program for publishing a bulletin and website about their activities.

The activities carried out in the youth center programs are interrelated, thus become one village empowerment program including environmental and human resources aspect. It is hoped this developmental model will improve the human resources’ quality, diversity of the activities and youth participations in building the city identity optimally.

**Conclusions**

In building the city identity, teenagers play important role. Throughout many creative activities, their role in leading the movement is the main subject. Based on the tradition or locality in managing the human and environmental resources, they actively help in building the image of Surakarta as a cultural city. The tangible effort in raising the participation is by building a youth center which can improve art creativity, skills, literacy, and be used as the basis of the youth activity that is accessible by the community.

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