INCLUSIVELY CREATIVE PRAXIS FOR SANDANG, PANGAN, PAPAN

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ABSTRACT

In early January 2020, when I was invited to give a talk for this IMADe conference, many of us here today were already working locally to envision and implement ways to promote the diversity of cultural expressions and advance creativity for sustainable development. With that in mind, I looked for relevant literature and noticed that our conference topic was the theme for the inaugural World Conference on Creative Economy: Inclusively Creative held in Nusa Dua, Bali in November 2018 and is also in the initiative by the Republic of Indonesia for a United Nations resolution, adopted in December 2019, to declare 2021 as the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development. But, since mid-March 2020, people everywhere in the world are living in the time of the global Covid-19 pandemic, which has accelerated this great challenge especially to meet basic human needs. These unfoldings spurred me to reflect on two parallel movements: one is the trajectory of related conceptual trends and international frameworks since 2015; the other is the emerging of some local small-scale innovations since the silent day of Nyepi 2020. Clearly current mobility and resource limitations are having an impact on the culture sector. Yet, it still seems possible that inclusively creative praxis for sandang, pangan, papan (clothing, food, and shelter) can contribute to the betterment of the world.

Keywords: inclusively creative; cultural heritage; praxis; sandang, pangan, papan

INTRODUCTION

In early January 2020, when I was invited to give a talk for this IMADe conference, many of us here today were already working locally to envision and implement ways to promote the diversity of cultural expressions and advance creativity for sustainable development. With that in mind, I looked for relevant literature and noticed that our conference topic was the theme for the inaugural World Conference on Creative Economy: Inclusively Creative held in Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia from 6 to 8 November 2018. It is also an aspect of the Republic of Indonesia initiative for a United Nations resolution, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 19 December 2019, to declare 2021 as the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development. But, since mid-March 2020, people everywhere in the world are living in the time of the global Covid-19 pandemic, which has accelerated this great challenge especially to meet basic human needs.

These unfoldings spurred me to reflect on two parallel movements: one is the trajectory of related conceptual trends and international frameworks since 2015; the other is the emerging of some local small-scale innovations since the silent day of Nyepi 2020. While my talk does not attempt to cover pandemic-related changes in all nations, clearly current mobility and resource limitations are having an impact on the culture sector. Yet, it still seems possible that inclusively creative praxis for sandang, pangan, papan (clothing, food, and shelter) can contribute to the betterment of the world.
MATERIALS AND METHODS

Related conceptual trends and international frameworks since 2015

Initially, my first question was: what is meant by ‘inclusively creative’? So, I decided to look at official documents of the United Nations as definitions of terms within them are derived from international meetings of experts and draw from their practical experiences and insights. In particular, the 1995 World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen defined an inclusive society as ‘a society for all’; a goal as well as a key process for sustainable development (see UN-DESA, 2005). Also in 1995, the ‘Our Creative Diversity’ report of the World Commission on Culture and Development followed by the 1998 ‘Stockholm Action Plan’ adopted by the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development and subsequently the 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity all called for the formulation of cultural policies and measures to promote the diversity of cultural expressions and advance creativity for sustainable development.

The above-mentioned international forums and action plans as well as others from the late 1990s mark the integration of culture in sustainable development frameworks. Following that period, both the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted in 2015 pledge to ‘create conditions for inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all’ (see UNESCO, 2015). Moreover, cultural and creative industries are recognized as drivers and enablers of development to foster economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

Culture and creativity has also been integrated into national sustainable development policies and plans since the founding of the Republic of Indonesia in 1945 (see Soebadio, 1985). Even since 2015, Indonesia has continued to take several major steps such as establishing the Badan Ekonomi Kreatif (BEKRAF) / Agency for Creative Economy. In a parallel process, Indonesian culture experts and practitioners and officials in ministries collaborated to tune the content of the Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia nomor 5 tahun 2017 tentang Pemajuan Kebudayaan (Act of the Republic of Indonesia number 5 of the Year 2017 concerning Cultural Advancement).

Some positive measures in fact were spawned in 2017 when BEKRAF in collaboration with the Indonesian Ministry for Foreign Affairs initiated two preparatory meetings for the first World Conference on Creative Economy (see WCCE, 2017). It is in the Chair’s Summary that one finds the theme ‘inclusively creative’ was derived from the ‘belief that the creative industry has brought a new era of businesses. It is no longer exclusive for those with huge capital, but has established a level playing field for everyone to take part in the emerging economy.’ The inaugural World Conference on Creative Economy: Inclusively Creative held in Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia from 6 to 8 November 2018, attended by 200 delegates from 37 countries and international organizations, ended with the adoption of the Bali Agenda for the Creative Economy (see WCCE, 2018). This twenty-one point outcome document recognizes ‘the growing aspirations to unlock the potential of culture, arts, talents, technology, innovation and other sources of the Creative Economy’. Moreover, it notes that ‘the Creative Economy can preserve local wisdoms, maintain cultural diversity and bring development of local economies that are rich with untapped cultural uniqueness’.

Most recently, the Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia nomor 24 tahun 2019 tentang Ekonomi Kreatif (Act of the Republic of Indonesia number 24 of the Year 2019 concerning Creative Economy) ratified on 24 October again emphasizes inclusivity by stating, ‘in achieving a just and prosperous society capable of advancing general welfare, the nation of Indonesian must optimize all economic resources, especially optimize the creativity of human resources based on cultural
heritage, knowledge, and/or technology.' On the world stage, the 19 December 2019 resolution of the UN General Assembly proclaiming 2021 as the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development noted with appreciation ‘the efforts to promote the creative economy in various international and regional conferences, including the first World Conference on Creative Economy, held in Bali, Indonesia.’

The input of artists, academics, and experts from a variety of fields within national and international forums has been essential in the drafting of these frameworks. For anyone interested in further reading, web-links to several documents can be found in the reference section of my paper.

**The importance of undertaking suitable concrete actions**

While creative economy policies are now prevalent; undertaking suitable concrete actions is the most important. So, my second question was: how have and how can we work locally to promote the diversity of cultural expressions and advance creativity for sustainable development. But, by mid-March 2020, when it was clear that we would be faced with the pandemic-related circumstances of mobility and resource limitations, I was caught in a quandary. In one moment contemplating the notion of ‘inclusively creative’; in the next concerned about how people can meet their basic needs. This led me to bring forward the idea of inclusively creative praxis for sandang, pangan, papan (clothing, food, and shelter).

So, next, I would like to recount a few moments from daily life in the traditional Balinese family compound where I reside, which hopefully can provide a picture of some of the possibilities of maintaining and transforming local wisdoms nowadays.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**The silent day of Nyepi in the Çaka-year 1942 / CE 2020 and a great pause**

One of the unique holy days in Bali is the silent day of Nyepi, which marks the start of the Bali Hindu lunar-based Çaka calendar year and in essence is a day of rest for the earth and all of its contents. Traditionally people do not light fire, or work, or use electricity or motor-driven machines, or leave their place of residence. Even the international airport and all ports are closed for twenty-four hours. In terms of environmental sustainability, the Bali Collaboration for Climate Change (see WALHI Bali, 2007) estimated that carbon emissions in Bali are reduced by at least twenty thousand tonnes on the silent day of Nyepi. It is truly beautiful – the sounds of the nature throughout the island, open sky, and the opportunity for introspection.

This year the day prior to the silent day of Nyepi was on 24 March 2020. But, due to global pandemic mitigation measures, the giant ogoh-ogoh papier-mâché puppets, handcrafted by youth, did not circumambulate the village main crossroad or process to the cremation ground that evening. Rather, just as each family sheltered-in-place in their home compound, each ogoh-ogoh remained in its respective balai banjar hamlet pavilion. On ngembak geni, the day after Nyepi, the hearth fire is rekindled and traditionally people visit neighbors and relatives. But this year, everyone was urged to continue to shelter-in-place. That day I asked the IMADe organizing committee if proactive steps were being taken to prepare for possible pandemic scenarios in October, such as convening this conference virtually online.

I sensed that the silent day of Nyepi marking the start of the Çaka-year 1942 also marked the start of a ‘great pause’ in the world. Without devaluing the social, cultural, and economic shocks that all communities are experiencing, it appears that this ‘great pause’ invites us to recall the recent Creative Economy act (see Republik Indonesia, 2019); especially the aim to ‘optimize the creativity of human resources based on cultural heritage’.
The emerging of some local small-scale innovations

Numerous local small-scale innovations have emerged since mid-March 2020. Here, I would like to list just a few that address a four-fold bottom line, namely economic, social, environmental and spiritual dimensions.

- artists planting local vegetable seeds, herbs, and fruit trees in their home gardens – increasing ‘greening’ of rural and urban areas
- people shopping for food stuff and daily goods at local pasar markets – increasing the dynamism of the traditional economic system
- a recycling center offering rice in exchange for used plastic – increasing plastic waste management while also increasing access to staple food
- handicraft artisans designing and producing face masks – increasing access to affordable personal protective apparel while generating home-based income
- home-based non-formal and formal education – increasing intergenerational exchanges between siblings and with parents for the transmission and transformation of traditional and new knowledge and skills
- family members recording and documenting homework assignments – increasing involvement with children’s learning and development
- culture and education sector organizations and individual artists and scholars offering online activities, performances, and webinars – increasing access to the arts and cultural heritage
- libraries and publishers providing open access to collections – increasing access to knowledge

One notable socio-cultural-religious phenomenon has been increased flying of kites. The tradition of kite-flying after the rice harvest season has a long history in Balinese culture connected with the mythos of Sang Rare Angon. But, during this ‘stay-at-home’ period, young boys (and at times with fathers or grandfathers) have hoisted a variety of kites daily; some with the sound of a rattan guwangan bullroarer. Freely dancing with a sense of togetherness in the open sky, each kite is moored to a home garden by a thin durable thread. Even at night dozens of kites with LED lights appear as newly formed constellations of stars.

CONCLUSION

Before I conclude, allow me to share another unfolding. Last month in the garden of the traditional Balinese family compound where I reside, the eldest son pruned the branches from all the potted bonsai trees. A few weeks later buds sprouted; amply on some, sparsely on others. This reminded me of a Javanese concept about development known as ranggal semb; which refers to the sprouting of a bud from an old tree stump. In other words, like a process of change that gives rise to an innovation which sprouts and blossoms from an older or decaying remnant.

In retrospect, it feels as though my talk today fits in the IMDA conference sub-theme of human-centered [and nature-centered] and locality in creative design. In this time of global pandemic-related mobility and resource limitations, this task is of crucial importance. So, I hope we can continue to work on ways to actualize inclusively creative praxis for sandang, pangan, papan (clothing, food, and shelter) for the betterment of the world.

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