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Semarang cultural ecology in the grip of capitalism

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Abstract. This paper aims to uncover capitalism's intervention in cultural ecological preservation in Semarang. The research questions included that 1) what are the cultural ecological conditions in Kulitan Town of Semarang? and 2) how is activism in Semarang in preventing cultural ecological damage by the impact of capitalism? This research was qualitative project with a case study framework. This study involved 15 informants with 3 categories, namely 6 activists for cultural preservation, 6 general people living in historical heritage environments, and 3 company owners. The data were analyzed by using an interactive model. The findings of this study indicate the existence of historical environmental damage caused by capitalism and this is the main problem of preservation of cultural ecology in Semarang. The most obvious damage is the loss of authenticity of historical heritage buildings. In addition, people's memories of the cultural ecology also began to fade, with indications of apathy towards the ongoing process of conservation. Activism in the context of cultural ecological preservation is carried out through community forums concerned with history and culture. The strategy is to conduct studies, correspondence, and plan actions. The implication of this research is that cultural ecology in Semarang must be protected through Law Number 11 of 2010, considering that the cultural ecology is a symbol of the identity and cultural richness of the people of Semarang.

1. Introduction

Semarang society in its development was squeezed by development towards a modern city[1]. The development of the city has a consequence on the fertility of the capital in shifting the living space of the city community[2]. The influence of capital is also seen in the damage to the environment of cultural heritage which is located in the center of city [3]. Historical heritage is the greatest cultural asset of a nation that needs its authenticity. Given that historical heritage objects contain enough important values for people's lives[4]. Historical heritage is also part of the cultural environment of urban communities that need attention[5]. The case in Semarang City shows that the influence of capital has urged the existence of historic buildings [6]. This goes to Kulitan Town, one of the most historic areas in Semarang. In that area, there was a wealthy merchant named Tasripin in the 19th century. In that place, there were several Javanese, Dutch, Arabic, and Chinese-style houses. There was also a mosque that showed that the settlers were Muslims[7]. Unfortunately, the place has not been maintained and has severe distortion. Like the loss of ancient house fences, house ornaments that began to break down, and some buildings are now damaged and replaced with building material factories.

The intervention of capitalism plays a major role in eroding the existence of historic buildings and city culture[8]. As explained above, currently the pros and cons of the influx of large-scale capital to modernize the city continue to this day. Some studies show that cultural ecology is damaged by policies that are influenced by ideology and economic goals[9]. There is also a research shows the destruction of cultural ecology is influenced by human behavior as a whole. The other factor is power which accommodates the interests of capitalism[10][3]. In conservation studies, damage to historic buildings can be overcome by the role of community activism. Caring, critical, and other social roles make passion for preserving the cultural environment increasingly developed. Activism is an inevitable keyword for communities that try to maintain their cultural existence through collective activities and efforts[11].



Cultural ecological damage is unavoidable at this time, but there are still opportunities to minimize this damage. Buildings of historical heritage that still exist and adorn the ecological culture of Semarang must be defended from the intervention of capitalism. As explained above, collective work is needed to balance the remaining cultural ecology. Collective work can begin with a spirit of activism and conservative behavior towards heritage objects. This is believed to prevent the loss of the originality of the historical heritage buildings that exist in the cultural ecology of Semarang [12,13].

This research tries to discuss the role of activism in the process of preserving the cultural environment in the city of Semarang under the intervention of capitalism which originates from the ideology and economic desires of development. The research questions included that 1) what are the cultural ecological conditions in Kulitan Town of Semarang and 2) how is activism at Semarang in preventing cultural ecological damage by the impact of capitalism?

2. Methods

This research was carried out qualitatively with reference to the case study framework. The case in this study is problem of capital influence on the existence of cultural environment in Semarang. According to Tight et al, the case study is a research framework that seeks to reveal problems / cases, by building the assumption that the case is urgent to be discussed [14]. The focus of this research is on the influence of ideology / power [3], building the city [15], and activism [10]. Deeper exploration is done to see the pattern of relationships between the three aspects.

This study involved 15 informants with 3 categories, namely 6 activists of cultural environmental preservation and 6 general people living in historical heritage environments. There are 6 pieces of data that have been generated, and codified into: Activist Data 1 (AD1), Activist Data 2 (AD2), Society Data 1 (SD1), Society Data 2 (SD2), Company Owner Data 1 (COD1), and Company Owner Data 2 (COD2). Data analysis of this study refers to Huberman, which is interactive data analysis to see the network framework of the community, activists, and company owners [16].

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Findings

Semarang is a fairly multicultural region, so many historical relics are found in the region. The multiculturalism of the Semarang people can be observed from the diversity of ethnicities and religions embraced by the community. The ethnic groups are Javanese, Arabic, Chinese, Banjar, Madura, and Minang. The existing religions are Islam, Christianity, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. One of the unique historical heritages can be found in Kulitan Town, Semarang City, Central Java, Indonesia. In Kulitan Town found some historical relics such as Chinese-style buildings, Javanese, Arabic, and Colonial. The building was formerly owned by Tasripin, the richest Muslim trader in the city of Semarang. SD1 argues: "Tasripin is a wealthy merchant in Java in the early 19th century, he succeeded in building his small kingdom in Kampung Kulitan, the name of the skin is also taken from the efforts he has been doing for decades, namely leather exports". His name is quite popular as an entrepreneur, so the Colonial government gave him privileges such as freeing up export tax fees, providing business permits, and facilitating Tasripin in developing its business. Tasripin's relationship was quite good with the Colonial government, but behind that he secretly became a philanthropist who paid attention to the lives of the poor.

The historical heritage buildings in Kulitan Town number 6, namely 1 arabic-style house with a characteristic three-door front, 2 large colonial-style houses, 2 Javanese-style houses, and 1 Tasripin heritage mosque. After the death of Tasripin in the 20th century, the buildings switched hands to the private sector, some of which are still privately managed. The building according to SD2: "is a building of high artistic value, and has been given recognition by the Semarang city government, even one of the Javanese-designed houses, made miniature and on display at the Beautiful Indonesia Miniature Park (TMII) Jakarta, a symbol of the greatness and glory of Rich Merchants Tasripin".

Kulitan Town is part of the cultural environment of Semarang, whose existence is threatened. At present, the Kulitan Town environment is converted into building material factories. There are only 2 houses that are officially managed by the Tasripin family, namely Javanese-style houses and Colonial style. Javanese-style houses are in poor condition, because they are not inhabited on a daily basis. The

entry of the factory into the environment is inherited from the private sector who feel they are running out of land in the heart of the city, COD1 argues: "This factory was established in the 1990s, and the price of land and buildings was not expensive. the existence of a factory like this".

These factories continue to operate today. In fact, The Arabic-style building has cracked due to vibrations arising from the surrounding factory machinery. Other factory activities, such as the decline in building materials on the terrace of the historic house were also a problem, this caused damage to the terrace of Tasripin's historic house. COD2 argues: "here the land is quite narrow, so we have to find a way to keep production activities going." SD2 argues: "factory activity at night is very disturbing to the environment, in addition many ornaments of house buildings are damaged due to these activities. Even the houses that have been made into factories, on the inside have changed completely".



Figure 1. Kulitan Town in the early 20th century

The destruction of the cultural environment in Kulitan Town provoked the attention of activists concerned with history and culture to immediately take a stand. Since 2010, they have called for the takeover of Tasripin heritage buildings that are used as factories. AD1 argues: "We monitor the historical building, since 2010 we have asked that the building be taken over and used as a City Cultural Heritage". The struggle to restore the building was not enough until the discourse, but they did several audiences with the government, the community and the owners of the company. AD2 argues: "the results of the hearings were not satisfactory, there were still many activists who were troubling the damage to the buildings. Slowly, like last week we observed, buildings that suffered damage to the window and front door ornaments, and damaged house support poles".

The influence of capital has changed the face of Kulitan Town, AD2 argues: "the influence of power has made Kulitan Town drastically damaged and a decline in historical value. Especially now that the community has forgotten the history of Tasripin so that the characters are now only posted". City development, according to SD1: "city development is based on the needs and objectives of power, not the objectives of the community. Socio-cultural aspects are not sufficiently taken into account in policy formulation. Despite the decline in value, the government has not yet accommodated the interests of the community at large, especially with regard to identity". Activists have made plans to save the cultural environment in the city of Semarang in 2018 which was agreed upon by the community and the city government. The action plan is as follows:

Table 1. Action Plan for Rescuing the Cultural Environment of the City of Semarang		
Aspect	Partner	Action Plan
Education	Office of Education and Culture	Cultured education is based on local historical sources
Tourism	Government tourism office	Preservation of cultural tourism-based cultural environment
Culture	Office of Education and Culture	Development of Community Care for Culture and History of the Nation

Economy	Investment and Integrated One-Stop Service Office	Tighten business permits and consider historical and cultural aspects of business operations
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3.2. Discussion

This study supports the opinion of Mitchell et al., Meeus, and Doeser that capitalism is the reason for the destruction of the cultural environment[9][10][3]. In addition, the power factor has perpetuated capitalism in intervening in the interests of preserving historical heritage. In this context, the community cannot do much because historical heritage has been acquired in ownership. So that the damage that occurs cannot be prevented preventively. The results of the study support the argument of Torre and Marta that historical heritage illustrates wisdom, community identity, behind it also describes self-esteem[17][18]. This study criticizes Marvin, that the Indonesian context of the damage to the cultural environment is dominated by ideological factors, in contrast to India[19]. City development is a determinant in realizing the interests of capitalism in Semarang. City development has opened the way for investors to seize many historical heritage buildings without regard to the value aspects in it, this is in line with Ingold, historical heritage physically damaged by the sense of humans who are not connected to their past, the damage can be reflected in many interests most general are economic interests[20].

The importance of ideology / power which is quite dominant in the form of city development has changed the face of Semarang City which has many cultural heritages, the city is quite multicultural, leaving many historical heritages with diverse styles[21], diversity is very clearly found in Kulitan Town. The damage that has occurred has received a strong response from the community after the discussion took place, they simply refused if the city development intervened in the preservation of the cultural environment, on the other hand they were also apathetic in the preservation process. In addition, the collective memory of historical heritage in Semarang has weakened, this has become the basis of the community's apathetic nature of conservation efforts. This is in line with Zimmerer's research, Swetnam et al., Higgs, that the collective memory of ancient buildings and other cultural heritage determines one's attitude towards historical and cultural preservation[22][11,22].

The activism to maintain the cultural environment in Semarang is quite massive. They conduct hearings, calls, and propaganda that effectively accommodates the interests of the wider community. Their actions received sympathy from many people, because they attracted the people with the call for collectivism. They always show that city problems are a common problem that must be solved together. The practice of wrong power must be straightened out, they have tried to change the direction of the preservation of the cultural environment since 2010, and in 2018 has produced an action plan agreed upon with the government and the community. Aspects in the action plan include: education, tourism, economy and culture. The four are expected to be a breakthrough in solving the problem of preserving the cultural environment, and inflamed capitalism in the city of Semarang. This research supports the opinion of Buser et al., Anderson, and Noel that problems in capitalism need to be activism resolved. Both are similar to a check and balance system in the management of the country. Activism limits the space for capitalism to move, whereas capitalism will be more directed and humane by the role of activism[23,24,25,26].

4. Conclusions

Preservation of the cultural environment is the most discussed discourse by the people of Semarang today. This was caused by damage to historical heritage buildings in several places, one of which was Kulitan Town. The discussion above shows that ideology / power with the form of city development has paved the way for capitalism to flourish in Semarang, besides that uncontrolled development has had an impact on the preservation of the cultural environment. People who began to ignore the history of the city were able to be moved by a desire for concern for the city because of propaganda carried out through hearings and appeals in the activism movement. City development should be encouraging news, but brutal capitalism has turned the face of development into a scary. This is what the people of Semarang are opposing, to maintain their identity, self-esteem, and inheritance. One of the important recommendations of this research is the need to enforce through Law Number 11 of 2010 concerning Cultural Heritage. The law will protect the cultural environment of Semarang.

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