

Growing and Archiving Youth Aspirations: Efforts of C20 Community in Preserving Surabaya Heritage

(Upaya Komunitas C20 dalam Menumbuhkan dan Mendokumentasikan Aspirasi Kaum Muda dalam Melestarikan Pusaka Surabaya)

Rahmad Hidayat

Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas PGRI Adi Buana
Jalan Dukuh Menanggal XII/4 Surabaya
Tel: +62 (031) 5041190
Surel: rahmadunipa@gmail.com

Abstrak

Makalah ini membahas upaya komunitas C20 di Surabaya yang secara aktif 'mengingat' kaum muda Surabaya tentang identitas mereka sendiri sebagai ahli waris Surabaya, yang kaya akan tradisi perkotaan pesisir, seperti kuliner, bangunan, dan pluralitas masyarakatnya. Markas komunitas tersebut, yang terletak di Jalan Cipto nomor 20 (yang menjelaskan bagaimana komunitas ini menamai dirinya), adalah tempat untuk merekam dan mempublikasikan aktivitas kaum muda Surabaya melalui kegiatan-kegiatan di ruang publik, seperti Ayorek.org, situs untuk mengumpulkan fakta-fakta dan nilai-nilai tentang Surabaya yang tampaknya dilupakan oleh kaum muda Surabaya. Fokus penelitian ini adalah cara kaum muda yang terlibat dalam komunitas ini beraspirasi untuk mendefinisikan (ulang) identitas mereka dan menemukan tempat mereka di era global ini. Mengambil kerangka metode kualitatif, peneliti mewawancarai para anggota komunitas C20 dan juga terlibat dalam kegiatan komunitas ini di Surabaya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa komunitas C20 di Surabaya mengisi ruang kosong yang ditinggalkan oleh Pemerintah Surabaya dengan memberdayakan kaum muda untuk melestarikan kota mereka sendiri. C20 juga berhasil menciptakan ruang aspirasi bagi mereka untuk tidak hanya mengabadikan Surabaya dalam ingatan tetapi juga untuk membuat Surabaya menjadi tempat yang lebih baik untuk hidup dan menjadi kreatif.

Kata kunci: aspirasi pemuda, komunitas C20, pengarsipan, Surabaya

Abstract

The paper attempts to highlight the efforts of C20 community in Surabaya to actively 'remind' Surabaya youngsters especially to their own identity as the heirs of Surabaya, which is rich in its coastal urban traditions such as culinaries, buildings, and the plurality of the people. Its base camp, located on Cipto street number 20 (which explains how it gets its name from), is a place to record and publish through activities in public spaces, such as Ayorek.org, a site to gather any facts and values about Surabaya which seem to be forgotten by Surabaya young people. The paper specifically focuses on the way youngsters involved in the community are aspired to (re)capture their identities and find their place in this global world. By doing qualitative research, I interviewed the members of community and was also involved in their activities in Surabaya. It is argued that the community of C20 in Surabaya is filling the empty space left by the Surabaya government in empowering the youth to preserve their own city. C20 is also successful in creating a place for youth aspirations not only to "memorize" Surabaya but also to make Surabaya a better place to live and to be creative.

Keywords: archiving, C20 community, Surabaya, youth aspiration

INTRODUCTION

One of the characteristics of a city is development, which is the spirit of city to fulfill its needs in many aspects as the consequence of the increasing/growth of the population who live in the city. Surabaya, the second largest city in Indonesia, has

shown a massive development. In the one hand, the development leads Surabaya to be a modern city in which it brings the beneficial economy for the Surabaya people. On the other hand, the development has brought about some consequences. One result is the increasing flow of people into the city. Currently, the number of population in Surabaya almost reaches 3 million and tends to rise in the future, which is predicted to be 2.75 percent per year as any other big cities in Indonesia (“Desa dan Kota Tahun 2035” 2014). Surabaya, since the colonial era, has become a magnet for people in villages or suburbans to find jobs or better lives. In the city, there are people who were born and raised in Surabaya, which we call “penduduk asli”, who are mostly Javanese, and there are also people whom we call “pendatang” (newcomers). These newcomers came and brought their own cultural values and practices in the city. Before the independence, they were mostly from Madurese, Chinese and Arab ethnic background. Afterwards, Surabaya has become a meeting place of many other cultures, such as Sundanese, Sumatrans and many others, adding more color and complexities to the already plural Surabaya. A modern city indeed is a site of globalization where many cultures and identities meet (Gottdiener and Budd 2005:8).

The most significant consequence of Surabaya development is the decreasing number of open city spaces. Business central areas replace empty lands and, in some cases, old settlements or the so-called *kampung*. These new business buildings and offices seem to ebb the historical legacy of Surabaya. When you walk or drive along Darmo street in Surabaya, for instance, you will find a number of exotic Dutch colonial buildings and houses, many of which unfortunately have been modified to fit the modern taste. In its peripheries, paddy fields and meadows were transformed into big factories employing nearly a million people. The length and width of streets have also been added as the impact of the increasing volume of vehicles. As a result, public spaces for social interaction among the people, especially for young people to meet and have communal activities, are not as many as a couple of decades ago. Although the city government has built more parks and open spaces in Surabaya, the city is embracing its industrial identity more than its plural and cultural identity.

This apparently becomes a major concern for a community of young people, who were mostly born in Surabaya and has witnessed the seeming fade of Surabaya historical and cultural legacy. The community named itself C20, as it is housed in Jl. Cipto no. 20. It was originally designed as a library and in its development it has extended its capacity as a collabitive as well. Kathleen Azali, the founder of the community, contends that Surabaya people must remind each other that the city is not only about businesses, factories, malls, and cafes, but also a place to live local cultures and historical legacy (Azali 2014). Surabaya also has many valuable things to make the people know and understand well about their city. Establishing community is indeed the central base for youth to absorb new ideas in exploring their creativities to involve in coloring urban environment (Mabala 2011). Development in many aspects should not make Surabaya young people become alienated with their city and lost their local identity.

Having strong intention to keep balance of urban life, the community does many activities and reminds people to their city as their 'common home'. It is what Burn called as a sense of place in which place unifies people who have been tied by emotion and feeling because of having the same experiences (2005:12). C20 is now becoming the place for many Surabaya youngsters to explore their ideas in documenting many historical places as well as the cultural diversity and hibridity, collecting books about Surabaya, and recording Surabaya culinary wealth.

Youth activity in attempts of urban revival has been discussed in previous research. Dillabough and Kennelly (2010) discussed about issues of class and gender faced by youth at the margins of urban centres and the attempts they made in (re)defining themselves. There is also research focusing on the mismatches between youth aspirations and participatory HIV/AIDS programmes in urban settings (Gibbs et al. 2010). In short, youth activities and aspirations are happening everywhere (see Larkin 2010 and Skelton 2013 for more examples). In this article, I examine the role of Surabaya youth to voice their aspirations through the activities in C20 community and specifically focuses on the way youngsters involved in the community are aspired to (re)capture their identities and find their place in this global world. The existence of such communities, I believe, is important in order to "humanize" the big city, making it "habitable". Aspiration itself is the intention to expose their responsibility as young people to their place where they live in (Deutch and Theodorou 2010). The youth activities are in fact the effort of negotiating with the metropolitan city (Knight 2003). I argue that C20 community in Surabaya is filling the empty space left by the Surabaya government in empowering the youth to preserve their own city. C20 is also successful in creating a place for youth aspirations not only to "memorize" Surabaya but also to make Surabaya a better place to live and to be creative.

METHOD

This research applies qualitative method in which it reveals the exploration of C20 community in archiving and documenting the important things in Surabaya city as their contribution to the "hero" city. By the method, the research tries to propose the role of C20 community as youngsters community to 'live' their city as a place which full of uniqueness for Surabaya people. The data and information are collected and then interpreted deeply and comprehensively.

The object of the research is C20 community in which the data are taken through observation of the community's activities and programs such as writing workshop entitled "Writing the City," exhibition about Surabaya city, Subside journal which is published by the community, and their website. To support the analysis, interview with the members of the community is done to get data and more information about what the community do. In addition to the interviews, I use participant observation wherever possible, as I am also a member of the community. I was involved in several programs held by the community to observe their activity and visited the "base camp" in Jl. Cipto number 20 Surabaya. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) argue that this kind of observation renders "reciprocity of perspectives," thus allowing a more "dialogic" form of observation rather than "monologic." By involving

such observation, I hope I could gain more insights from this research as it allows deeper reflexivity for the researcher as well as the readers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

From Books to Action

Founded in 2008, C20 community began from the private library which is owned by Kathleen as the initiator of the community. As a book lover, she got much knowledge about Surabaya by reading many books on one side. On the other hand, she realized that it is difficult for her to share and discuss about the urban life in Surabaya city because she did not find a serious community in Surabaya which explore more about the hero city (Azali 2014). Therefore, she took graduate program in Airlangga University to study more about culture. "Since then I have many friends in Unair to discuss about culture and urban life," Kathleen said.

Having many books, Kathleen wanted to have a community to read and think seriously about Surabaya. That is why she used her private library as a home for C20 community. She invited many youngsters to share and discuss in the library and arranged many activities and programs. Interestingly, the community becomes not only as library but also a place for discussion forum by inviting many scholars to share their thought and ideas. Amongst them is Robbie Pieters, an Indonesianist and historian with special interest in Surabaya, who share his insight about the city. Yuli, a C20 librarian, explained that there are many youngsters, especially on Saturday and Sunday, who visited C20 to read and borrow books (Yuli 2014). They also do many activities such as held discussion to do a research about Surabaya city.

Revealing the Other Side of the City

Surabaya
 With its flourishing expansion
 The city's bustling activities
 And the cyclic wheel of life that keeps on rolling
 Sometimes induced people to forget the other side of the city
 The side we happened to see everyday
 But we take it for granted
 Every heritages and ancient buildings
 Had become the silent witnesses of the founding of this city
 Day by day get buried by the younger civilization
 (Arffandy 2013)

The above statement is used as narration of documentary film produced by Petra campus community and published in Ayorek.org, a website run by C20 community. It is interesting to see how the narrative knocks the awareness of Surabaya people not to forget their valuable heritage in Surabaya city. Portraying the historical streets and ancient buildings, especially Han's house as the main focus in the film, the documentary film wants to remind Surabaya people to look (back) behind their own identity as a plural city since the house is built and owned by Chinese descendants.

They are also eager to inform that Chinese people are part of Surabaya people and they have been here since the colonial era.

For C20 community, the other sides of city should be revealed to remind Surabaya people to their 'origin' which has shaped the identity of the city for years. There are many sides in Surabaya which are forgotten and ignored by Surabaya people because of globalization and development influences. The appearance of malls, western-like cafes and lifestyle seems to distract the attention away from the local values. Some, if I may not say many, Surabaya youngsters barely recognize their cultural heritage. According to Azali (2014), she needed two years to attract youngsters and Surabaya people to share the same dreams and actively participate to make them happen. The dreams she talked about are making Surabaya a comfortable city for everyone with her/his own different cultural, education, and economical background, a peaceful place for everyone, and a space of modernity without forgetting and ignoring their cultural identity as "arek suroboyo" (Surabaya young citizens).

The existence of C20 community for almost six years in Surabaya highlights the willingness of Surabaya young generation to explore the things that are valuable to reconstruct the local identity almost forgotten – an activity called by Maciocco as the action of reinventing the city (2008:105). The activities in exploring the other sides of Surabaya are also supported by local newspapers such as Jawa Pos and local TV stations such as JTV (Jawa Pos Television) and SBO. The local media, however, are present only in certain events. The community thus strives to strengthen its means of communication and provides an alternative media in Surabaya to demonstrate the rich aspects of urban life. The publication of newsletters, Subside journal, and ayorek.org, for example, has proven the "militant" activities of C20 community members to explore Surabaya as the wonderful city. There are about ten members in C20 community, ranging from 17 to 30 years old, who are involved in the publication and other activities. They develop a kind of citizenship journalism to investigate and record and then publish the Surabaya legacies and events which have much important contribution to develop Surabaya as a big city. They even have books about Surabaya not found in other libraries in Surabaya and maybe elsewhere. The publication becomes a real project for the community to reclaim the legacy of Surabaya.

As the community devotes itself in librarianship and collaborative, C20 community explores many other sides of Surabaya city in forms of feature writings in their journals and website. Last May 2014, the community held a workshop entitled "Writing the City". It was open for public and encouraged any form of expressions in their writings. They wrote about old museums and buildings, old and unique kampong, the history of tram, cultural practices in Surabaya, and not to mention its culinary tradition. These "lay" writings, fascinatingly, were supported with many sources and data. Reading their publications is like reading a research paper but in fancy and fun way. The community even publishes the writings in bilingual form, Indonesia and English, to make it accessible to foreigners or international writers and researchers interested in visiting or writing Surabaya.

Visitors, readers, and participants in the event stated that they learned so much about their city and themselves. It is not surprising as the efforts of exploring the historical places of a city is a way to understand urban life (Maicocco 2008:105). In an interview, Ayos, the speaker of “Writing the City Workshop” and also a senior member of C20 community, explained that many Surabaya youngsters did not know well about Surabaya (Ayos 2014). They did not understand about its history and historic places in Surabaya. Through such events, youngsters could get the information by writing it and making it city documents, accessible for public. In the workshop, Ayos shared his journalistic and writing skills to participants in order to write well and passionately.

One of the participants, Adrea, who happily received heavy criticism in the writing workshop, confessed that the activity gave her so much to learn (Adrea 2014). The main reason she was involved was that she felt boring to see only malls and malls and the lifestyle they offer. “We must take out Surabaya people especially for youth to know many important places and urban heritage in Surabaya to enrich their knowledge about urban life,” said Adrea. She further asserted that urban life was more meaningful for young generation when a city reflected the plurality of life. A city should provide many offerings for youth people to explore their creativity in the global world.

A city should provide alternative readings, places or spaces for youngsters in Surabaya to develop their characters—a spot left by the government. In this case, C20 community appears to fulfill the “empty space” for the youngsters’ needs in urban area. “Our concern is everything about Surabaya and urban life and of course without forgetting another knowledge and activities as the place to develop youngsters’ creativity,” said Kathleen (Azali 2014).

The Spirit of Celebrating Urban Mosaic

C20 community is concerned with exploring stories, people, places and connecting people of Surabaya city. The concern becomes the spirit of the community to facilitate its members and many communities in Surabaya to interact and cooperate to make Surabaya life more colorful in its plurality. The spirit is also represented in its membership. There are people from Chinese ethnic, such as Kathleen and Erlin; some are from Arab descendants, like Adil and Abid; and some others are from Javanese ethnic background. The diversity epitomizes the urban mosaic in Surabaya. Kathleen always reminds the members that it is important to gather youngsters without seeing their ethnic background.

The community steps more than just a gathering place for youngsters. It seriously uses its all efforts and sources to communicate and connect to many communities in Surabaya as real projects. One of the communities is “Paguyuban stren kali,” who fights for betterment for urban people living in Surabaya river banks. Together with C20, the community actively reports river life with its unique activities and culture in urban area.

Gatot, one of the Paguyuban Stren Kali activists, said that it is important to build a network among communities in Surabaya so that they can interchange information about Surabaya (Gatot 2014). In his opinion, C20 community has important role to defend the identity of Surabaya by archiving and documenting historical buildings and places, culture and culinary. "I hope this community can develop their programs and share it to everyone in this city," said Gatot when he joined "Writing the City" workshop. "I also tried to give contribution to this community by sending my report about urban life in Surabaya in term of the people's perspective who live in river bank," Gatot continued. This perspective is in line with Mayer's argument that the city belongs to the people, not "for profit" (2012:63), meaning that urban dwellers have the right to enjoy the space in their city – a notion which is often forgotten in the name of "development".

This highlights the other side of Surabaya people which full of business and trading area as the trade mark of Surabaya. In the meantime, the community of Reog dance, indigenous cultural dance from Surabaya, offers youngsters to join the community in order to maintain the original culture of Surabaya.

Not only does C20 deal with social activists, it also connects to communities focusing on artistic activities. *My Sister Fingers* is a community who encourage people to love handicraft made by Surabaya people. In music, *Renozine Webzite* explores indie music. In education space, *Indonesian Youth Motion* proves its concerns in educating Surabaya children. Next, *Serikat Mural Surabaya* community leaves a message to Surabaya young generation to live in peace through its graffitis along Surabaya streets. Another community C20 reaches is Reog dance community, indigenous cultural dance of Ponorogo living in Surabaya. Reviving and maintaining Reog highlight the values of egalitarianism and warm welcome, which has long characterized Surabaya. In short, community networking initiated by C20 community exposes the richness of urban life in Surabaya. C20 hence becomes the "big house" of the various communities in Surabaya.

These efforts, fortunately, are not without recognition from the city government. Some time ago, Surabaya Tourism Board wanted to hold an event to introduce Surabaya. Lack of internal sources and information on Surabaya youth activities and creativities, they invited C20 community to join the fair to do the job (Azali 2014). This proves that somehow C20 community has succeeded in its effort to be knowledge reference and aggregator for the sake of Surabaya city.

CONCLUSION

As the centre of reading place and library in the beginning, C20 community now becomes an asset, part of the wealth owned by Surabaya city. They are successful in reinventing city through their activities. Different from common youngsters communities usually exploring popular culture as the canal of their expressions and identity constructions, C20 is successful in archiving and documenting valuable things or the treasure of Surabaya, such as original food of Surabaya, ancient buildings, and the cultural life of Surabaya.

Interestingly, C20 supports its writings with a rich sources and data, allowing them to be alternative references to know about Surabaya, especially for young generations. As the community has no funding and is supported by volunteers, the support from the youngsters is a great capital to work for better and friendlier Surabaya. It has been shown in the article how C20 becomes a place and space for youth in conveying their aspirations. The efforts of C20 community even replace the activities that should be done by government having more authority and resources, funding and apparatus. It would be interesting for further research to discuss the extent the government takes part in C20 activities and whether it supports or even somehow “intervene” the programs.

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