

Young People Constructing Identities through Local Portal “Nggalek.co”

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Abstract

Globalization itself is redefined as one of society’s self-description insofar as, according to Luhmann’s theory, society is conceived as a cognitive system that can only handle information (about the world, about itself) only through its own specific operation (communication), so that globalization affects society solely when the later communicates about the former. Among such rapid communication in globalized era, the local people’s identities is in questions. What and how the local young people construct their identities by making the use of internet portal. This paper is aimed at understanding how the local young people in Trenggalek (a rural district in southern coastal area of East Java) construct identities through a local portal of “nggalek.co”. The Trenggalek-based portal “nggalek.co” was founded last year, in 2016, and is intended as the means for communicating their localities to their own community and to the world.

This paper will explore the ways the portal represents the negotiation between its local and global cultural aspects. This is interesting to study because communicating globalization also conveys an account of society’s current state, such as the description of local people, exploring local wisdom, environmental problems, and other local people’s concern on their daily life, that in the larger impact contribute to the building of “self-knowledge” and identities.

Introduction

It is the fact that the new media gives more power for people at large, mainly giving more opportunities in participating in the community’s lives through the voice that people can deliver. It is not surprising that in Indonesia context after reformation, there are many different voices come up from the common people, which is sometimes sparking controversies such as the phenomena of viral photos and status of young girl popularly named “awkarin”. On the other side, the new

media also gives bigger opportunities for people especially those who previously unarticulated due to the social political system.

This paper intends to address the content of a portal nggalek.co as the means of articulating the voices of young people of Trenggalek. This portal is interesting to be observed because it has strategic roles, not only in articulating the voice of local young people, but also building the knowledge owned and shaped by local young people, including the local wisdom that is traditionally practiced by communities in many aspects of life. We can find out such local knowledge and local wisdom, for example, in how rural people treat and cultivate their land, in traditional ways, in the procession of preparing the land before planting it. In the process of planting paddy that involves many women, giving treatment to the plants and the soil, as well as the tradition in harvesting, all of which is building harmonious relationship between human being and nature. In addition, this portal also highlights its advocating and strengthening the local traditional art and culture in facing the global culture that is more difficult to be avoided in the new media era.

This study focuses on the question on how the local and global identities negotiated in the portal “nggalek.co”. This is a qualitative research with the focus on the content of internet media. There are two approaches to answer the questions of research. First, data will be analyzed under the frame of identity theory, by referring to Castells (2010). There are three kinds of identities: legitimizing identity, resistant identity and project identity. Negotiation of local and global identities will be studied to understand the discourse and ideology built through the politics of identity. Second, in analyzing the data, it applies the method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by Fairclough, which focus on the three levels of analysis, mainly micro, mezo and macro levels of analysis.

Data sources of this study are the texts from the websites of nggalek.co from its first article on March up to September 2016, all of which are around 85 articles, covering the themes of biography of local people, environmental, local-tradition and popular cultures.

“Nggalek.co”; Local Portal with Locally Powerful Issue

Nggalek.co is a portal based in Trenggalek that focuses its writings on the theme of local issues and explores the local wisdom in many aspects. The article is mostly written in essay genre, instead of news. This choice of genre is based on the agreement but the management of nggalek.co, a group of young people interested in giving contribution to the local development, by scrutinizing and giving their eyes on the daily practice of the local government and communities. This portal covers local issues of development in Kabupaten Trenggalek and the problems related to its people.

There are about 85 articles published in this portal since its first launching, March 2016 up to September 2016. There are many themes presented in the articles ranging from the topics of local history, local wisdom, daily activities of the local people, up to articles critically analyzing the policies of the local (regent) government of Trenggalek in running its programs. There are a few short stories presented in the portal, all of which share the common point, about the local people and place of Trenggalek.

The management of this group, through this portal, aims at exploring and developing knowledge based on local wisdom and local experience. By developing the local wisdom, they expect that it will significantly contribute to the local development. A development that considers fairly, between the tangible and intangible potencies, between physical and human development. Their concern is that so far, the intangible aspects, such as tradition, local wisdom, history, culture, are not yet taken into account sufficiently in the developmental process.

Trenggalek in the young people’s consciousness (the founders of nggalek.co) is a little town with abundant tangible potencies, such as beautiful and fertile natural landscape as well as cultural landscape. Cultural and natural heritages are the most precious capital possessed by the region and it culturally needs to be explored further. The cultural exploration of the society enables them to build better human resources and ensure the rural sustainability. This action is also the response to the government and stakeholders in Trenggalek that is deemed not sufficiently give a

high priority on the intangible aspects such as human resources and cultural development.

With the identity of a creative group, establishing the portal 'nggalek.co' is the first step to go further in building rural sustainability through literacy. This portal is a means to communicate their rural daily social problems, through analyzing and exploring them into articles that easy to understand. Building the knowledge based on local wisdom is the aims of the group, in addition to their goal to build the local region as a good town that takes local tradition and culture into account, ensuring rural sustainability for the people's welfare.

Local Identities through the Use of Javanese Language

The portal "nggalek.co" has the tagline *jajah desa milang kori* meaning that exploring the villages from one hamlet to the others to count the (people house's) doors, collecting local wisdom and documenting local traditional practices. The Javanese words used for this tagline emphasizes the locality of this portal. This portal is based in Trenggalek, East Java, of which most people speak Javanese language as their mother tongue. Although the language used in writing articles in this portal is Indonesian language, the Javanese language is often inserted in the articles, mostly to give the sense of locality and traditionality of a particular expression.

The Javanese language used in the text is the dialect of Trenggalek, East Java. This seems natural for the portal to use Indonesian language and sometimes interrupted with some Javanese words with dialect of Trenggalek Javanese language, which is different from Malang dialect or Surabaya dialect. This is due to the fact that the editor and most of the readers of this portal uses Javanese language with dialect of Trenggalek Javanese in as his mother tongue. For instance the Javanese word "jeru" is used instead of "jero" (Javanese language with central java dialect) meaning "deep."

In some articles, the Javanese terms are used not only as the inserted term, but as the topic, theme, and title, expressing the main topic subject of a particular social

practice and this Javanese (Trenggalek dialect) term becomes popular or well known since then. For example, the word “ngadim” is used in an article by Trigus D. Susilo (2 May 2016). The word “ngadim” refers to the skill of fishing by using boat and net. There are many ways and terms used in fishing, and ‘ngadim’ is popularly used among local fishermen in Prigi and Trenggalek in general. This specific local term in the area of fishing enriches the local knowledge of social practice of traditional fishing.

Another local word “mbecek” is exposed in the article “Kenapa Musim Kawin selalu Berbarengan?” (3 October 2016). “Mbecek” is particularly used in Trenggalek and some other parts of East Java, referring to the activity of attending a wedding ceremony or another ceremony, by bringing some money in an envelope. This cultural activity of “mbecek” highlights the community’s habit that implies solidarity to the neighbours, friends, or relatives by giving contribution for their costly activities (ceremonies). They build solidarity, helping each other by giving some money and when they have their own ceremony, the other people and neighbour will do the similar thing. The circulation of money among the people through the practice of “mbecek” contributes to the community’s well-being by sharing their money to the others.

There are many other terms, especially local Javanese terms such as “rewang”, “Larung Sembonyo”, “Perahu Kunting”, “Nener” comprehensively discussed in many articles in this portal. All of this addressing local social practices will have led to a kind of inventory of peoples’s tradition and daily practices. Much more important than just a matter of pride with local language, this inventory of local tradition will come someday to the understanding of the tradition and building local knowledge. Such understanding on the local daily activities will avoid people to the cultural banality that in many times happen to urban cosmopolitan people.

This is interesting as well, that the language used in the articles in the portal is not only Javanese language, but also English. Some articles in this portal insert English words for particular expression. Most of the English words in the articles are not sparking any semantical problem. However, there is one article specifically address the use of the English as the subject matter, that is the article under the title

“Trenggalek Southern Paradise atau Berteman Hati” (Pulung , 27/7) addressing the use of English language to build the brand and identity of Trenggalek. This article gives criticism of the English phrase, “Trenggalek Southern Paradise” as the English word is called “keminggris” (negative connotation of using English word to express something). The Trenggalek identity expressed in English is considered not a genuine identity.

Global - Local Identity in Environmental Issues

This portal gives more highlights on the environmental issues that become people’s daily problems. The local identities is expressed in the big concern on the problems related with the surrounding environmental issues such as the management of waste, garbage, policy on forest management, the policy of green technology, policy of green public areas.

The environmental issues becomes the big concern, especially when it is related with the policy of the government in the development. Criticism on developmental issues is always related to the sustainability of the development that should consider the environmental burden.

Some articles showing the concerns on these issues are, “Kebersihan Tempat Wisata Tanggung Jawab Siapa?” (07-06 , Trigus), “Musuh Perayaan adalah Sampah” (27-08, Roin). There is a concern that discussing the environmental issues is not separated from the global issues. The article “Merenungkan ide pembangunan bupati Trenggalek” (08-08, Wahyu) criticises the government’s plan to invite investor more than inviting people’s participation. The ideas of investment from foreign or global company is a big concern. The global company or foreign investment is commonly understood as the capitalist with the biggest interest in their own profit and not care local people’s wellbeing.

This portal strengthens the ideas that new media internet gives more opportunities for the people to participate in the community’s life. In addressing the environmental issues, peoples, through the writing, questions the policy of the government in its policy in development. Many of the articles articulate the

necessity for the local government (Pemerintah Kabupaten Trenggalek) to give priority on the local wisdom, people safety, and environmental protection and conservation (against deforestation, illegal logging, and river pollution).

Negotiating Identity from Local History

Local history is a strategic field to build common understanding on self-identity. By exploring the local history of a kampung, local tradition, local place, people will have a good understanding on their place and people. People will understand of what they are doing, and what happens to them. To some extent this understanding will avoid the banalities of culture, because people understand completely on their culture and daily practice. Banality of culture happens when people do not really understand of what they are doing because of the illusion strongly provided by the life surrounding them.

Some of the articles providing the theme of local history are as following. An article written by Gilang (03-07) under the title “Surodakan, Makna Sebuah Kampung” (Surodakan, the meaning of Kampung). The second series of the essay on this kampung “Surodakan” (17-07) continues the exploration of the name kampung “Surodakan”. An article by Choirur Rokhim (25-07) entitled “Cerita Cengkih dan Ekonomi Rakyat,” (24-08, Misbahus Surur) “Trenggalek Kota Pertahanan”, (02-08, Misbahus Surur) “Jejak Pesantren Kuno di Trenggalek.” M. Choirur Rochim (22-06) under the title “Dukuh Kebon dan Tanaman Kopi” discusses the history of a place, Dukuh Kebon in Tasikmadu village, Watulimo district.

The theme of local history is also related to the theme of tourism. As a place with many tourism destination areas, the local government of Trenggalek has tourism program aiming at increasing local income by promoting the tourism in Trenggalek. So far, Prigi coastal area, for instance is the most popular destination area. The government tries to build other places as tourism destination areas, however the program does not run well as written in some articles. An article written by Misbahus Surur (22-07) with the title “Dilem Wilis dari Dekat” addressing a place

called “Dilem Wilis” as part of tourism village “Domyong” that needs to be built further, seriously to become a tourism destination area. As a tourist destination village, there are only some coffee trees left (only 10 trees). So that the question is what are the program to support this village as a tourist destination village.

An article by Choirur Rochim (27-06) under the title “Trenggalek Nama dan Stigma” discusses the popular imagination on the little town of Trenggalek as a silent tranquil small town that is far from “kejumudan hingar bingar perkotaan”. However, the stigma of this place as a “daerah tertinggal” (left behind), made Trenggalek, was historically deleted from the map, constructed as a “ndesa, and terbelakang”. Rokhim, through this article proposes an idea to explore the local potencies to fight against the stigma. Exploring the local products and tourist destination areas are among other things. Another article by Choirul Rokhim, “Ritual Larung Sembonyo” (31-08) shows how a cultural activity of Larung Sembonyo can be handled by the local people and this preservation of people’s tradition in Prigi coastal areas can not be done without people’s participation.

Local Wisdom vis a vis Global (Capitalist) Identity

The local identity is also built from the concept of local wisdom. The local wisdom is defined as the tradition rooted in the community’s life since the old times. The local wisdom is importantly to be exposed for contemporary generation because of its marginalized position in contemporary discourse, when young people and older people do not know anymore about a particular tradition. Otherwise, this local wisdom will be endangered by the flooding of contemporary popular culture celebrated and supported by the power of capital.

Exposing and exploring the local wisdom can be read from the article by Misbahus Surur (29-04) “Desa dan Kearifan Lokal Persawahan.” The local wisdom is defined as tradition that has been done by local people for generations in the practice of planting mix-crops (tumpangsari) vis a vis monoculture planting system. This gives more benefits to the farmers because this practice fertilize the soil. In addition, this practice also accounts the roles of women farmers in the process of planting, taking care of the plants, and harvesting.

This local wisdom in the area of “persawahan” is opposed to the modernization in farming/agriculture (labelled as the global identity) that introduced the green revolution, doing farming with technologies such as chemical fertilizers, machineries, artificial seeds, intensive farming, that give bad impact on the long run of soil fertility and social and cultural changes of people’s life.

The article also discusses the roles of women in traditional farming system. In traditional and local context, women give bigger contribution in daily life, actively involving in the process of producing food crops, and the women are close to nature. The writer of this article construct the local farmer traditional practice as part of the local identities. The local identity is self identity while the opposed, other identity constructed is the farmers in western country, of which the women are considered as more consumptive and masculinity principle is more dominant in agriculture by the dominant use of machine and technology.

There are many other examples of articles highlighting the local wisdom. One of them is an article by Bonari Nabonelar (04-05) “Trenggalek dan Konservasi Bambu”, observes the local potencies of bamboo plants, that is very useful for many daily uses such as making many kitchen wares and building homes. This conservation of bamboo culture is environmentally friendly and this materials are available alot in the local land, and this leads to the counter of plastic culture (any daily utentils are made of plastics) that is not environmentally friendly and more costly.

The article highlights the facts that traditionally, bamboo is close to people’s daily life, but in the modern time, the bamboo wares is replaced by many plastic-made wares. This contestation, between bamboo-wares and plastic-wares is like the contestation between “Timun mungsuh duren” (cucumbers versus durian). The contesation between the wares made from bamboo and the wares made from plastic is not a fair competition, because the traditional bamboo-made wares is not backed by a big company or capital, while the plastic wares is supported by big factory and capital. On the other hand, plastic is not environmentally friendly, because in a long run it can not be decomposed. “Bamboo conservation is a big potency to be developed especially in anticipating the free market system, in which the flood of

goods from other country will attack the local market.” The self identity is manifested in the developing local bamboo-made wares which is less costly and the material is available locally. It is also environmentally friendly. This is opposed to the plastic-wares as the product made by factory and it is not environmentally friendly. Plastic-ware is opposed to the local wisdom of bamboo-wares.

In discussing the local wisdom, it can be avoided to criticize the local government policy, as an article written by Trigus Dodik (24-05) entitled “Festival Rakyat yang tidak merakyat”. From its title the readers can understand the criticism on festival delivered in Trenggalek on 20-22 May 2016. The criticism spots the problem that the name of festival is “people’s festival” but the benefit of this activity did not go to the people. This activity is more beneficial for those sellers from out of Trenggalek. For example there was a “Food truck”, that came to the festival and get much profit from the festival. When Alvin, the vice of Regent of Trenggalek was interviewed, he said that this is a test case to find out how interesting Trenggalek is. The point is that the festival is not benefitted for Trenggalek people themselves. It is not “oleh dan untuk” (by and for) Trenggalek people.

The article related with local wisdom as the important tool of analysis is presented in the essay by Misbahus Surur (30-08) “Trenggalek pada suatu Pagi”. This gives the ideas of emphasizing the necessity of “local wisdom” instead of the elite’s personal taste (the new government) as the important account in the local government policy making, to ensure the rural sustainability.

Conclusion

To sum up, the ideas of global and local is not completely separate binary identities. Instead, those two groups of identities are related each other. However, it is considered important for the management of ‘nggalek.co’ to strengthen the local culture as the “self-identity”.

Strengthening local identity is an important strategy to response social changes embedded in modernities. As people understand that modernities are brought by many aspects in our daily life, from economy, education, culture, and others, that

bring many social changes. Not all people are ready for understanding nor perceiving the changes, to some extent. Therefore, it is necessary to have some cultural strategies to encounter the changes.

It can be concluded that the strategy to strengthen the local identity provided in the *nggalek.co* is as following. First, by using the local Javanese language. The Javanese terms are not only used to show the localities but the terms are used to explain a particular subject, thus build 'local knowledge', strengthening local identity.

Promoting local wisdom and local daily practices (in agriculture, fishery culture, folk art, folk literacy) becomes an important cultural strategy in building local identities. The localities are any habit and culture that are familiar with the people's life and this is related to the existence of the people culturally. It is important, therefore to support and strengthen the local wisdom embeded in the people's tradition.

One of the most strategic ways in promoting local knowledge is exploring and building local history. The understanding of "who we are and where we are from" is an existensial matter that can be answered through the exploration of local history. The local history covers the story of the *kampung*, places, tradition, all of which lead to the building of local knowledge. Because, knowledge is power.

The negotiation between local and global identities happens in the following ways; the global values or influence that is against the local social practice are negotiated, criticized and if possible, denied. On the other hand, global values or influence that support the social local wisdom are accepted. For example, the concept of ecocriticism by Vandana Silva. The negotiation between 'local and global' also involves the criticism not only global values not in line with the local wisdom but also governmental policies in development paradigm (social, educational, art, phisical, economy programs) which does not beneficial for the people in short run nor in long run.

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