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Reinventing Place-identity and Embracing New Economic Opportunities: Promoting Creative Economy of Sanur Through Public Participation

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Abstract

Every place on the planet has unique characters that make it distinguishable from other sites. Place-identity is the term widely accepted to explain this phenomenon. It is argued that the place-identity could not only strengthen the sense of belonging of the locals to a place and improve social cohesion but, in the age of global tourism, it could also increase the attractiveness of the place to visitors. Therefore, it contains economic values if managed in a proper way. But places are transforming. The dynamics of contemporary activities where tradition is seen as outdated, new government system, new economic activities, and new actors and their roles challenge the stability of place-identity. Unfortunately, the transformation of a place may benefit some actors but may trouble other groups. Some places, however, maintain their place-identity for the social and economic values it holds. Collaboration among different actors in managing the transformation of such place could maintain the place-identity of a place which ensures its attractiveness to visitors, sustains its economic values amidst rapid changes. The collaboration confirms no one is left behind. The case study research conducted in Sanur showed that the sustained place-identity could economically benefit all actors.

Key words: place-identity, economic opportunities, tourism, role of local actors

Introduction

The construction of place-identity involves many dimensions and is not a simple process. It is dynamic, consists of tangible components, such as the built and natural physical components of the place in which daily life takes place and its morphological transformation; and intangible components, such as the history

of the place and the perceptions of the locals, as well as the visitors (Watson & Bentley, 2007). Both tangible and intangible components are not static but in a state of constant change. Nevertheless, each place has enduring quality upon which its place-identity is mostly associated with. It ensures the stability of place-identity amidst rapid changes in its components. However, stability is

challenged when immediate and significant transformation occurs. This may happen when a new governance system takes over or dominates the management of a particular place formerly administered by traditional society members (Bourdier & AlSayyad, 1989). Powerful stakeholders may control the decision-making process and lead the transformation to fulfil their needs.

On the other hand, some people may feel powerless because they could not participate in the process (Santos, 2004; Madanipour, 2013). This may increase the feeling of insecure because their life is threatened. Most importantly, large scale changes could also lessen the attractiveness of a place to potential visitors craving for authenticity.

Human identification with a place presupposes that a place has a character which consists of physical components, shapes and concrete things that create the atmosphere of the place (Norberg-Schulz, 1980). Vernacular building processes of the traditional people in the pre-industrial era, where materials were gathered from surrounding areas and construction processes were locally developed, made the settlement familiar and blended in with the occupants. The locals created a deep process of identification with the physical components of their built-environment from which people could differentiate their village from another. The relationship between the people and a particular place builds place-identity that helps them define who they are as individuals and as members of a

community (Watson & Bentley, 2007). Therefore, place-identity is the understanding of humans with the place in which they are living in (Proshansky & Kaminoff, 1983). A deeper meaning of place-identity is about what a place means to people. Meaningful places are often content with a sense of stability. This can be understood because the meaning of the place is important for the inhabitant's life both as an individual or a member of the community. Given that they convey a sense of stability, the place-identity of a particular place often associated with authenticity. By most standards, authenticity is considered to be the quality of a building or landscape developed with local materials and construction methods following local building traditions (Watson & Bentley, 2007). Authentic places are often attracting visitors who bring economic benefits to the locals. Tourism is nowadays considered as one among many businesses that dominate global economic development. It provides jobs, increases family earning and boosts local and national revenue. Therefore, place-identity attracts investment, job seekers and is favored by the local and national government as part of their development strategy.

A particular place, however, may be occupied by different people and different groups. Each person or group may develop a different relationship with the place because the association to a place is largely influenced by experience and perception. Different ways of experiencing and perceiving a place are, in turn, creating a distinctive human's

association with a place. One place may be explained differently by different people because each person has personal feelings. Moreover, the same person may also explain the same place in different ways in different timeframes as their experience with the place grows.

Different place's narratives of different person or group of people may raise tensions of representation. This may occur if those whose representation is not included in the narration of the place. For example, when the government makes plans to advertise a city in order to attract tourists, the most attractive and visually appealing parts may dominate the narrative. In contrast, urban activists may expose the poorest parts of the city in order to gain sympathy and hide the more prosperous areas. This means that access to shared meanings is political (Appleyard, 1976). The political problem of who tells the story and what purpose the story serves may cause disputes and conflict. Those whose voices are not represented may feel a sense of powerlessness. This sense could be reduced by involving all community members in developing a consensus to construct place-identity (Hague & Jenkins, 2004). Public participation mechanism, where different voices are accommodated, is believed as a means to reduce tensions of representation in place-identity construction. Moreover, the inclusive process may strengthen the sense of communal control over the place in question (Putra, 2017).

The physical components of a particular place are in a state of constant transformation. The evolution may influence how it is experienced and perceived; therefore, bring impact to the place-identity of the place. Because every place is in a state of constant change, its place-identity should be managed in order to avoid its negative impacts on social and economic potentials of the place (Putra, 2017). This paper investigates the management of place-identity of a particular place rooted in tradition, based on agriculture, but in contemporary situation is ruled by the national government, who offers non-traditional economic activities, and rapidly change. It explores the roles of local inhabitants who consolidate their power in order to have significant roles in the transformation processes.

Methodology

Case study research is relevant to inquire about the place-identity because it is place-specific. In order to do so, Sanur, in Denpasar Bali-Indonesia, was selected as the case for this study. Sanur is one of many settlements that construct the City of Denpasar in Bali. It is located in the easternmost part of the city, next to a beach. Originally, the local people worked as farmers, but nowadays tourism sector dominates economic activities. The shift from traditional economic system to a creative-based economy of tourism has transformed the place-identity of the area.

The investigation of the area was started by evaluating the components that construct the place-identity and how those

components have transformed. In this case, urban morphology method was used. By employing urban morphology, the physical components of the case study are analyzed. Firstly, the transformation of the overall layout of the village is investigated. To do so, development plans and their implementation in different timeframes which causes the place to transform are investigated. Maps to carry out morphological analysis were derived from google earth. In order to understand how the case has been transforming, interview data were translated into spatial analysis. This spatial analysis was superimposed to see the pattern of physical transformation. From the document analysis, the physical transformation of the area is revealed. This will be presented in morphological maps and images. On the second stage, the roles of different institutions in the development of the area are also studied. This included analysis of different political systems and decision-making processes from which the logic of space planning in relation to socio-economic and culture could be understood. Furthermore, since the place-identity is also constructed from people's perception, it is also important to appreciate the voices of the people and to look at their creative ways of managing the place-identity. Therefore, in-depth qualitative interview was also conducted.

The morphological analysis is conducted to analyze different actors in different periods of development as well as local perception analysis were compared and related. The results are

grouped into four dimensions of analysis: cosmological transformation, socio-political and economic transformations, spatial and physical transformation, and architectural transformation.

Results

The evaluation on socio-political and physical transformation showed that Sanur has gone through several morphological periods from pre-colonial to post-colonial. In each period, the governance structure has been shifted from one system to another. This has impacted the social, economic, and, in turn, the spatial and physical arrangement of the village which makes its place-identity to transform. Analysis on the four dimensions of transformation shows that the cosmology is the most resistance to change while architecture is the most vulnerable. Paragraphs below show the analysis of transformation of the village.

The pre-colonial period

The majority of the villagers were work as farmers to support their family. Wet rice was the most importance crop not only in Sanur but Bali in general. Wet-rice farming has formed the basic cosmology for the Balinese including the people of Sanur. Water, the main element of the farming activities is important. Therefore, water sources are protected and seen as the source of wealth. In order to protect the sources, the mountains and highlands were respected. These areas are also believed as the residences of the ancestor spirits. On the other hand, areas that are less fertile were less valuable

although are still respected because these locations are believed as the dwelling of impure spirits. With this duality, the people develop a sense of location where they live between the two distinctive locations of highland and sea. In Sanur, rice fields and temples are located on the mountain-ward of the village and areas around the sea was avoided. The locals occupy area in the middle. This cosmological-based lay out was implemented since the pre-colonial until the colonial era when agriculture dominated the cultural landscape of Sanur. The inhabitants defined and associated themselves as farmers and agriculture.

A traditional village governance was responsible in managing the operational of the place. Originally, the village was established by a priest family and their supporters. The supporters were, then, divided into five hamlets. At this level, democratically-elected leader led each hamlet. In higher level, the village, the leader was elected among the priest family members. Although the village leader held the highest position in the local governance system, the hamlet leaders were also important because they were the ears of the top leader. This shows that in the traditional period, the local inhabitants had full control over the area. Independently, they manage all village's rituals, economic activities as well as daily life.

Access to natural resources was also in the hand of local people. This enable them to build the village using local materials such as local wood, stone

derived from the beach. Moreover, local builders also developed regional construction methods. As a result, the village's lay out and the physical components of the area fit with its environment and occupants.

The traditional cosmology, agriculture, local governance system and the physical components formed the place-identity of the area.

The colonial period

In the colonial period, there was a shift in the governance system of Sanur. In the first decade of the 20th century, the island of Bali fell under the control of the Dutch Colonial Government. The traditional way of managing the area of the Island of Bali was impacted by the new system. In order to consolidate the powers of many traditional governments all over the island, the new government formed a centralistic system. The island was managed under one residency led by a formal leader. The main motif of the new government was to get economic benefits from local resources to be sold to international market. Two important features of the colonial city were area with rich natural resources and harbor from which the resources were sent to international market. In this period, Sanur with relatively small agriculture lands offered little opportunity although it is located in close proximity with Denpasar as the City Centre. Therefore, the colonial government paid little attention to this village. This situation, however, open another opportunity. Its close proximity and its traditional life attracted foreigners

to visit and stay. A Belgian born artist, Adrien Le Mayeur, preferred to stay in Sanur than in the city center. Furthermore, some other foreigners also came and stay.

New government system brought little impact to Sanur but economically it had become a tourist destination. People were started to invest in commercial bungalows and homestays. Local people and some foreigners managed these facilities where buildings were designed in traditional architecture. Because the colonial government had little interest, the traditional leaders maintained their domination over political landscape of the area.

The Post-Colonial era

After the independence of Indonesia was declared, Bali joined as one of its provinces. The intention of the newly born government was to introduce the country to international audiences. Tourism was seen as an effective means to fulfil this aim. In order to do so, the central government evaluated the potential of Sanur as it already known by the westerners.

In addition to introducing the new country, the Government of the Republic of Indonesia also would like to show the word that this country is not lagging behind. They believed that employing modern architecture would make Indonesia known as part of the modern world. Moreover, modern architecture was also used to raise the pride of the people of Indonesia who were stigmatized during the colonial period. Furthermore,

this strategy was believed would diminish the feeling of powerlessness.

With its political power, the central government constructed a new hotel in Sanur in 1963 with the hope that it will host hundreds of guests. The guests were hoped to introduce Indonesia to the world after staying in the hotel. International style of modern architecture was the norm at that time and the hotel was designed with it. It was built in a boxy building with white cladding ten floors above the ground. This would invite a massive number of tourists. The building was the tallest structure on the island and its form was strange in the eye of the locals. Following the government strategy, to attract tourists, private investors also built similar facilities but with different styles. Knowing that the markets were craving for authenticity, facilities that were built by these groups of developers employed traditional building styles. They believed that the place-identity of Sanur is the main features that attract tourists and, therefore, should be strengthened instead of being replaced with the newer building styles.

Many hotels, which were designed and built in the early Indonesian independence, were following the path of the early investors. Along the coastline of Sanur, hotels and homestays with traditional styles dominated the cultural landscape. The new style was the antithesis of the government intention to introduce modern building style to develop pride. This shows that the central government and the investors saw place-identity from two different perspectives.

On one hand, the central government would like to employ it as a means of introducing the country as the new modern nation. On the other hand, the investors saw that place-identity could be employed as income generators.

Although the locals praised the new government strategy and the investor's effort to provide new economic activities, they locals felt that both could impact their place-identity. New actors potentially outweighed the roles of local people in maintaining their area. Manuel Castells argues that when a group people under the domination of another, they may consolidate their power to build trenches and protect their identity (Castells, 2009). In 1964, the people of Sanur established a new foundation named '*Yayasan Pembangunan Sanur*' or the Sanur Development Foundation. The locals would like to play important roles in the development of the areas so that their voice could be heard by both the government and the investors. Moreover, the locals also would like to develop businesses so that they could enjoy the benefits of the attractiveness of their place-identity. Supplying raw food materials for hotels and restaurants, providing laundry services, opening school specializing in tourism management, and establishing micro finance for the locals were among the early activities of the foundation. In addition, nowadays, the foundation also manages some hotels and villas. However, managing the overall landscape of the village, including physical component and activities accommodated by it, is the

strongest role they played. Therefore, the *Yayasan Pembangunan Sanur* has anticipated the domination top down decision-making process that may impact their life.

Today, all planning schemes and building permits will only be getting approval after being reviewed by the *Yayasan Pembangunan Sanur*. This does not mean that they hold full control over the development of the area. Their role is to ensure that any new development and activity will not offend or obstruct the place-identity of the area. The role of *Yayasan Pembangunan Sanur* is to coordinate the needs and intentions of different actors in the development of the Area.

Contemporary period

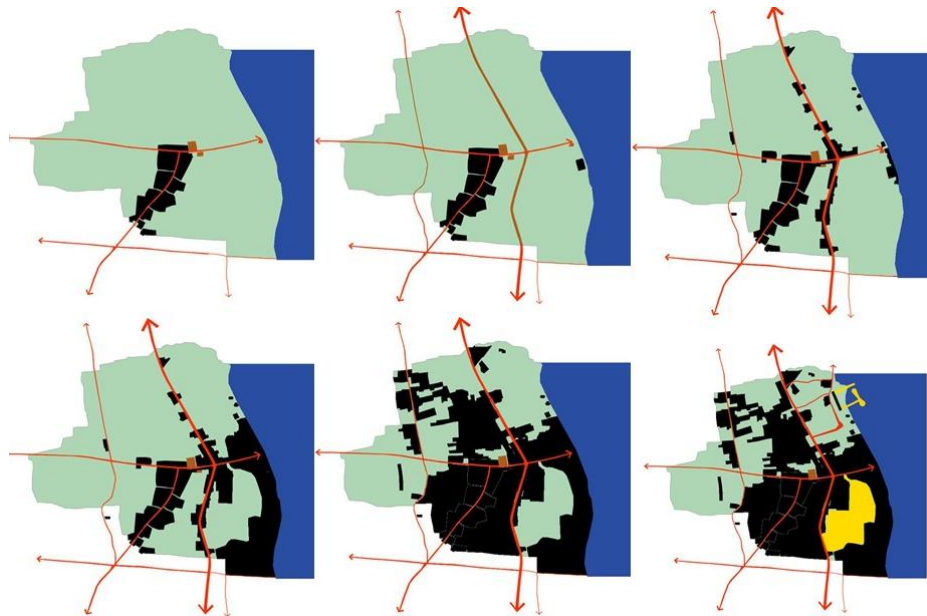
The success of Sanur in maintaining their place-identity continues. Areas on the beach keep attracting tourists and also investors. Investments grow at a neck-racking pace. One could not find any place along the beach without tourism activities. Hotels, restaurants, villas and other leisure facilities occupied the coastline. Working on tourism industry is also offering better income if it is compared with being a farmer. Agriculture no longer attractive and, therefore, is declining. This has influencing job market where young generations are leaving agriculture to work on leisure industry. Not only local people, tourism industry also attracts workers from other places, creates the phenomenon of urbanization. Tourism industry necessitates large amount of land

to build facilities as well as housing for their worker. This leads to spatial transformation.

The beach is transforming from an avoided place with little economic values to the most attractive area. The government, investors, and the locals alike nowadays favor the beach. Therefore, its value is increasing. Therefore, the price of lands close to the beach is higher than the

agricultural site. Ruled by land market, the spatial arrangement of Sanur shows a division between three different groups. The first group is the traditional people who occupied the traditional part of the area. The second group is the investors who control lands that offer economic value in relation to tourism business and the third group is the migrants who get the benefit from the declining attraction of agriculture.

Figure 1. Morphological change of Sanur in different development periods. Black areas show the built-form while green and blue signify rice fields and sea respectively



Source: Author

This situation is different from the pre-colonial period when cosmology ruled division of land.

However, the locals maintain them believe that cosmology is important and should still be used as a guidance in maintaining and managing the area. Although the landscape has changed, the locals maintain the ritual that is based on

cosmology. In physical arrangement, the locals maintain and sustain the traditional part of the area based on cosmology. Traditional village arrangement is preserved where the temple is still seen as the most sacred and respected part of it. At smaller scale, the building height is limited not be higher than 15 meters.

Traditional architecture implementation is encouraged.

The spatial transformation of the area in different time-frame could be seen from Figure 1. Six images show how Sanur has grown from a small traditional village based on agriculture into a large area containing many economic activities

where tourism is the most important feature.

The spatial transformation of Sanur is shaped by the transformation of power struggles among different actors. Table 1 shows the shift in the governance system of Sanur and its socio-political impacts on the place.

Table 1. Shift Governance System

Governance system-economic means	Stakeholders/actors	Decision making process
Pre-colonial Village republic-agriculture	Traditional society; Traditional Village's governance	Semi-democratic led by village leaders
Colonial Centralistic government focusing on trading	Colonial government; Individual entrepreneur (small scale); Traditional society; Traditional Village's governance	Top down
Post-colonial Centralistic government focusing on national political agenda - tourism	National government in national, provincial and municipal level; Private entrepreneur; Traditional society; Traditional Village's governance, <i>Yayasan Pembangunan Sanur</i>	Top down at national level
Contemporary De-centralistic government - tourism	National government in national, provincial and municipal level; Private entrepreneur; International investors; Traditional society; Traditional Village's governance, <i>Yayasan Pembangunan Sanur</i>	Top down at municipal level and bottom up by the democratic process at village level

Source: Author

Conclusion and future works

A place is both a product and a process. It is shaped by power struggles and as a product it also shapes the power struggles that construct the place. Given that the interaction between people and place contains evaluative instruments, cities have changed and will continue to change. Immediate and large-scale change imposed from outside may heighten fear and anxiety because the society has

limited power to manage and control it. Lack of access to the decision-making process might also lead to a feeling of being socially excluded because the goal of contributing to managing change is not always being accommodated. In this situation, willingness to participate in developing the city may decline (Madanipour, 2013), leading to a weakening sense of attachment and sense of belonging, two essential features of place-identity.

Nowadays, economic themes have transformed many places in the world. Sanur is also experiencing similar trend where focus on financial benefits have influenced the place-identity of the area that is rooted in tradition that an active process of transmission, interpretation, negotiation and adaptation of vernacular skills, knowledge and experiences and, to be' socially accepted, it is often commented on and even criticized. Thus, it is continuously renegotiated. The negotiation is often becoming they key to tradition to survive. This paper shows that the local people of Sanur is also renegotiated their tradition in order to maintain the place-identity of the area and embrace new opportunity brought by tourism.

The place-identity dynamics of Sanur shows that the involvement of local actors is significant. The local actors succeed in consolidating their power in order to have significant role to participate in development. Thus, they neither feel insecure nor powerless. Furthermore, they roles also maintain the place-identity of the area and sustain the sense of authenticity that attracts tourists and investors. Therefore, the place-identity of the area continues inviting visitors and investors, ensures its economic values.

This research is based on multi actor involvement in the construction of place-identity dynamics. It revealed that the participation of the locals is important. However, this paper has some limitation. The first limitation is its sample that is only one area and this area. It needs to be

tested in other areas with different socio-cultural background to see if the actor involvement framework could be generalized. Furthermore, in local level, the role of the locals in maintaining agricultural lands should also be studied. This is important because agriculture is acknowledged as the original *raison d'être* of the area. This will reinforce the sense of rootedness that support the strength of the place-identity of the area.

About the Author

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