

Conference Paper

Commodification of Mount Gede Pangrango National Park

Khaerul Amri and Awan Sandi Pungkas

Department of Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia

Abstract

Mount Gede Pangrango National Park (TNGGP) is an area of conservation administrator of natural resources and ecosystem located in Bogor, Cianjur, and Sukabumi District, West Java. One of its functions is the development and utilization of environmental service and natural tourism. Commodification of Mount Gede Pangrango was conducted by the government with the intention of increasing country's income as well as maintaining natural preservation. Concomitant rise of technology and media, especially after the presence of '5 cm' film and social-media activism, mountaineering activity has transformed into a popular activity resulting in a new meaning. Its implication is the emergence of new commodification conducted by several actors behind TNGGP with a capital accumulation motive in the end being to stabilize the new meaning of mountaineering activity. Those actors are private (agencies of mountaineering tourism, volunteer/ranger, product brand), local society, and government – that keep on negotiating and contesting in order to commodify the meaning of mountain and mountaineering activity. Then, what are new commodification forms conducted by those actors? How TNGGP is interpreted by those actors? And what are the kind of negotiation and contestation among them? Those questions will be answered in this article. The hypothesis is that each actor utilized power and access belonging to them in order to accumulate capital, both by commodifying TNGGP and the meaning of mountaineering activity by various ways. Each actor interprets TNGGP differently that has complex connection among them, but they rely on each other, and are profitable at once. This article is conducted by analysis qualitative descriptive method. Data are obtained through interview and engaged observation, including literature study and documentation of portal media.

Keywords: Mount Gede Pangrango National Park, commodification, actor, negotiation, contestation

Corresponding Author:

Khaerul Amri

Received: 8 June 2018

Accepted: 17 July 2018

Published: 8 August 2018

Publishing services provided by
Knowledge E

© Khaerul Amri and Awan Sandi Pungkas. This article is distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License](#), which permits unrestricted use and redistribution provided that the original author and source are credited.

Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the 2nd ICVHE Conference Committee.

OPEN ACCESS

1. Introduction

Film '5 cm' is an adaptation of best-seller novel by Donny Dhiringantoro which tells about adventure of five friends made the climb on Mount Semeru. Through friendship, adventure, and nationalism themes, the movie with main background of Semeru mountains natural beauty acquired a great success and managed to inspire Indonesian people, especially young people to do mountaineering activities.

After the presence of the film on December 2012, it was reported that the number of mountaineering activities in Indonesia increased significantly. Based on information of Center for Bromo Tengger Semeru (BB TNBTS), they estimated that there were 5,000 to 10,000 mountaineers a week on December 25th 2012 to January 1st 2013. Head of BB TNBTS, Ayu Dewi Utari said that the number of mountaineering activity increased more than 100% (In year 2009 and 2010, the number of mountaineer on Mount Semeru are 2,532 and 2,769 people). It is also common in the area of Mount Gede Pangrango National Park (TNGGP). According to statistics issued by the Center for Mount Gede Pangrango National Park (BB TNGGP), there were 82,131 mountaineers in 2013. The number increased approximately 116% from previous year which only reached 37,900 mountaineers (Statistics of The Center for Mount Gede Pangrango National Park in 2013). The increasing in the number of mountaineers then followed by increasing of mountaineering activity admission rate in all National Parks. Besides the government, non-government parties also took an advantage of the increasing numbers of mountaineering activity with different motives.

This study discusses the making meaning process of Mount Gede Pangrango National Park by related parties, they are Center for Mount Gede Pangrango National Park, mountaineering providers, Mount Gede Pangrango rangers (volunteer), and host communities. Discussion on these is conducted to see the contestation and negotiation of the actors of commodification. This study is conducted using analysis qualitative descriptive method. In order to obtain primary data, researchers conducted observation in Mount Gede through Gunung Putri track and conducted interviews to several mountaineers, traders on the mountain, host communities, and mountaineering providers. This study consists of four parts; begins with discussion of the background issues discussed, the second part elaborates the context of nature commodification by government, the third part discusses about commodification and the making meaning process TNGGP by related parties, and closed by the conclusion of commodification practices and emergence of the making meaning process.

2. Context of New Commodification Practices

This part aims to show that commodification is already enshrined in the function of Mount Gede Pangrango National Park. The function is as stipulated in the Work Plan Document of Center for Mount Gede Pangrango National Park year 2009. As other conservation area in Indonesia, the management of Mount Gede Pangrango National Park is being responsibility of Directorate General of Forest Protection and Nature Conservation, Indonesia Forestry Department. In implementation, the national park is managed by the Center for Mount Gede Pangrango National Park located in Cibodas, Cianjur District.

In the document, the center for TNGGP has a duty to conserve natural resources and ecosystem and to manage national park area under legislation applicable. In carrying out the duty of managing national park area, the center for TNGGP has 10 functions (See Attachment 10 Functions of The Center for Mount Gede Pangrango National Park), one of which is development and utilization of environmental service and natural tourism

The commodification process occurred in Mount Gede cannot be separated from the development of nature tourism in Indonesia. Nature tourism has recreational purposes involved a number of people to visit such a place (nature) and spend their money in order to gain experience interacting with extra ordinary biological communities ([6]:2). Nature tourism concept is utilized as a tool to preserve and protect conservation area. In many countries, this concept is accepted increasingly. Liverman (2004) in his journal entitled *Who Governs, at What Scale and at What Price? Geography, Environmental Governance, and the Commodification of Nature* referred to Daily (1997); Anderson and Leal (2001); Pagiola et al. (2002) explained that there is widespread acceptance across a wide range of countries that the way to protect environment is to price nature's services, assign property rights, and trade these services within a global market. Nature tourism or ecotourism refers to several ventures relied on nature commodification, and/or the commodification of human-nature relationship ([2]:460).

To do mountaineering activities on Mount Gede, every mountaineer must have a permit to enter conservation area (*simaksi*) issued by the center for TNGGP. Every mountaineer must register online through website <http://www.gedepangrango.org/> online-booking. Furthermore, after mountaineer had completed the registration procedures, *simaksi* could be took at the office of the center for TNGGP in Cibodas. The center for TNGGP applies different admission rate (Based on Government Regulation No. 12 Year 2014 regarding Type and Rate on Non-Tax Revenue prevailing in Ministry

of Forestry, entrance ticket to national park for mountaineering activities increased of 300%), depending on mountaineer and mountaineering activity time (In general rule of Mount Gede Pangrango mountaineering, every mountaineer pay entrance ticket and insurance for 2 days 1 night, as follows: domestic (weekdays) Rp27.500/person, domestic (weekend) Rp32.500, student Rp16.000, foreign (weekdays) Rp157.500, foreign (weekend) Rp232.500).

In addition to apply admission rate, the center for TNGGP also regulate the maximum limit of 600 mountaineers at a time of mountaineering activity. The maximum quota is divided into three entrances, namely 300 mountaineers pass Cibodas, 200 mountaineer pass Gunung Putri, and 100 mountaineer pass Salabintana. Practically, especially on weekend, mountaineers on Mount Gede could reach more than 600 people (Based on field observation to find out data for this paper, also according to one of mountain ranger that was guiding clients, mountaineer could reach 1,000 people. Observation is conducted on Saturday-Sunday, September 3-4 2016) at a time. The high number of mountaineers on Mount Gede which exceeds the maximum quota is influenced by many factors, one of which is commodification of Mount Gede and mountaineering activity itself.

3. Commodification Practices of Mount Gede Pangrango

The increasing number of mountaineering activity creating new forms of commodification done by related parties, such as mountaineering providers, host communities and mountain ranger (volunteer). This part describes factors and commodification process, along with relation among the actors.

4. Mountaineering Provider

Generally, mountaineering providers promote Mount Gede Pangrango, with sites along its mountaineering route, through websites which connect to social media, like Facebook and Twitter. The providers explain that the sites, comprising waterfall, hot spring, blue lake, Surya Kencana square and Puncak, are attractions for mountaineering. Moreover, some providers also have specific offers, for instance a provider known as Wisata Gunung Indonesia. They offer the beauty of Surya Kencana square and tip of the mountain as a good place to take photos. Another provider challenges mountaineer to go through an extreme track, called 'Evil Rising Path'. ("Evil Rising Path" is a precipitous cliff with 70-80 degree of slope, in which ropes are provided to pass it. In recent years,

alternative route has been opened to avoid the extreme path) Specifically, they called this track as extreme playground in Mount Gede Pangrango.

Aside of offering nature's beauty, the providers also give facilities such as transportation, tent, foods, cooking tools, tour guide, porter, entry permit and souvenirs. The facilities give flexibility to the mountaineer to bring sufficient personal stuffs, particularly for novice mountaineers, in which guide and porter are provided to minimize accident (In general rules of Mount Gede Pangrango mountaineering, the national park agency highly suggests to include an experienced mountaineer in a group or hiring guide to decrease accident risk.).

Mountaineering provider is not only profitable for the mountaineers, as explained by Dede (Interview in Depok, September 6, 2016) – a guide from Indomountain Adventure Service – host communities have always been hired to carry mountaineering equipment. He also said local people get profit from renting their houses to stay the night.

Usually, pre or post mountaineering, mountaineers always stop by residents' houses to prepare or purchase some foods. Beside, mountaineers often give foods as they finish mountaineering.

Dede has guided tourists for 40 to 50 times to hike the mountain. In certain condition, if maximum quota of 600 person reached, he used broker to get entry permit, in which he had prior informed his clients that they would get no insurance if accident happened. The clients, moreover, understood the condition.

4.1. Host communities

Mountaineering popularity of Mount Gede Pangrango presents entry permit service provider by host communities and rangers, promoted by word of mouth. For instance, when visiting Cibodas, the writer is offered service of entry permit by local residents. Meanwhile, in Mount Putri village, in order to hike Mount Gede Pangrango, a local resident approached and offered the writer, a service to get entry permit without being listed in quota limit. Besides, he was also able to take mountaineers to get into conservation area without having to get permit or register at entry post. Such thing was conducted in some certain situations such as quota limit, conservation area closure due to maintenance, and sudden visit of mountaineers. An informant – a local resident – has done the practice for three years. When Mount Gede Pangrango is closed for any mountaineering activities, he could guide mountaineers to the peak without any permit.

An informant, one of Mount Putri residents, said the practice was conducted as local people have rights to utilize natural resources in their domicile. This kind of illegal practice along with the over quota of mountaineers are known by the national park agency. According to an informant, the authority gives the way to such practice. The agency officials recognize that in fact, mountaineers of Mount Gede Pangrango can reach up to more than 600 people.

On the other side, the national park agency somehow has urgency to local people. If accident occurs, like get lost, sick, or even death, local people are involved in the search and rescue process. Even, in particular condition, they become the first one to evacuate death mountaineer.

4.2. Volunteer of Mount Gede Pangrango National Park

Aside of local people, an informant from mountaineering provider revealed his company has hired volunteer (Volunteer can also be called mountain ranger.) for 4 to 5 times over entry permit. The volunteers frequently handle legal entry permit. Margin obtained from registration fee is used to buy food or cigarettes. As volunteer, they get no monthly salary from national park agency. To fulfill their daily needs, according to an informant, they offer services comprising outbound, catering, guiding and entry permit; or even collecting garbage to be sold.

In Mount Gede Pangrango National Park, there are three volunteers as partner for the agency to be deployed in three entry gates. One of their tasks is to secure national park entry gate, especially for mountaineering activity. The volunteers give suggestion to the mountaineer prior to mountaineering, such as bringing back garbage from their camp, obeying mountaineering procedure and checking belongings.

5. The Meaning-making Process of Mount Gunung Gede Pangrango

Mount Gede is not only undergone a transformation, but also the commodification of value by the relevant parties. Commodification is the process that is associated with the capitalism which the object, quality, and sign is used as a commodity as an item which the ultimate goal is to be sold on the market (Barker, 2005: 412). Fairclough (1995: 207) in Raditya (2014) states that the process of commodification is an activity that not only produce commodities to be sold, but also organizing and designing the production, distribution and consumption process.

Mount Gede meaning construction is aligned with the development of popular culture and the customer's definition. In this case, the meaning of Mount Gede was redefined according to the needs of mountaineer nowadays. For mountaineering service providers, technological developments such as the presence of social media has turn into a tools to reconstruct its meaning. Social media becomes a space for uploading photos and discourse used to attract consumers through beautiful picture of posing on the mountain. In addition, a mountain as an extreme place has to face its meanings reconstruction in such a way to attract the mountaineer.

The beauty of Mount Gede and its various sites in it has lure the service providers as well as mountaineer. Commodity not only in Mount Gede as the object itself as the meaning of the mountain itself is also reconstructed as an adaptation of the mountaineer's popularity development. Mountain meaning construction appeared following the mountaineer's popularity which is came from urban society and considered as a beginner mountaineer. Furthermore, various facilities which offered by the mountaineering service providers are also considered as a support of Mount Gede meaning reconstruction.

For host communities, Mount Gede defined as a resources which available and used not only can be used by certain parties. In this sense, national park entry for mountaineering activity not only for mountaineer who have *simaksi*. Several host communities of the Mount Gede surroundings will facilitate the access for mountaineering or anyone who wants to mountaineering the Mount Gede and may provide a higher rate. In this case, the host communities are benefited by the Center for TNGGP's interest, so intertwined a mutualism symbiotic relationship between two closely related parties. A tight relation means that the Center for TNGGP has the authority of Mount Gede access for each climber who has legal *simaksi*. On the other hand, the Center for TNGGP was powerless on crack down the brokering practices carried out by local people which forced Mount Gede to accommodate mountaineer more than its maximum quota,

6. Conclusion

Commodification TNGGP performed by the actors behind the curtain is not only changes the general meaning of mountaineering activities, but also causes new problems which related to the environmental issues. The meaning of mountaineering activities which were previously closely related to its high risk, requires special preparation and knowledge, is also a gradual process, has shifted to the activity that is practical, safe, and popular. Furthermore, the mountainous nature conservation

which should be a place for plants and animals has turned into a place which is precisely contrary to the ideals of conservation. This number of bins, damaged flora, animal's behavior changes or casualties' is evident from the mountaineering activity. Ecotourism development in the TNGGP regions shows a poor relation between the parties which are trying to capitalized the nature which is caused by contestation and negotiation between the involved parties. Even so, the development of ecotourism in the TNGGP regions can be seen as a well-managed action which improves the host communities economy.

References

- [1] Barker, Chris. 2004. *Cultural Studies: Teori & Praktik*. Yogyakarta: Kreasi Wacana.
- [2] Johnston, Barbara R. & Edwards, Ted. (1994). *The Commodification of Mountaineering*. Article in *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 459-478.
- [3] Liverman, Diana. (2004). *Who Governs, at What Scale and at What Price? Geography, Environmental Governance, and the Commodification of Nature*. *Journal of Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 94, No. 4, pp. 734-738.
- [4] Purmono, A. (2013). Gara-gara 5 Cm, Pendaki ke Semeru Melonjak Drastis, Tempo.co: <https://m.tempo.co/read/news/2013/02/23/108463203/gara-gara-5-cm-pendaki-ke-semeru-melonjak-drastis>, diunggah 23/2/2013, diakses 5/6/2016.
- [5] Raditya, Michael HB. 2014. *Antara Rasa dan Estetika Komodifikasi Nilai Konsumsi pada Pangan sebagai Wujud Eksistensi*. *Kawistara*, Vol. 4, No. 2, hal. 111-224.
- [6] Supriatna, Jatna. 2014. *Berwisata Alam di Taman Nasional*. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- [7] Supriatna, Jatna. 2013. *Statistik TNGGP Tahun 2013*. Taman Nasional Gunung Gede Pangrango: <http://www.gedepangrango.org/unduh/>, diunggah 2013, diakses 20/12/2015.