

## Conference Paper

# Potentials of AMDAL Kebudayaan

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This is the third of three conferences over the past year focused on the effects of digital technologies on the cultures of the Southeast Asian nations for which I have been invited to deliver a talk. The first time was related to the roles of cultural heritage in the 4.0 industrial revolution. The second reexamined culture after the digital turn. This time, the task is articulating art, design, and education to reinforce cultural sustainability in the disruptive era. Hence, I propose to reflect on the growing recognition of the linkages between biological and cultural diversity, particularly in terms of the sustainable development paradigm. In view of that, I want to invite everyone to consider the potentials of AMDAL Kebudayaan (cultural environmental impact assessment) in policies and in application.

**Keywords:** AMDAL Kebudayaan, biocultural diversity, arts, cultural sustainability

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## 1. Introduction

This is the third of three conferences over the past year focused on the effects of digital technologies on the cultures of Southeast Asian nations for which I have been invited to deliver a talk. The first time was for the 7th International Seminar on Nusantara Heritage held at University Malaysia Kelantan themed the roles of cultural heritage in the 4.0 industrial revolution. So, I spoke about 'Cultural heritage and the role of spatial-temporal-kinesthetic knowledge through the arts' (Butler, 2018). The second was for the 3rd Social Sciences, Humanities and Education Conference convened by Universitas Negeri Surabaya, which aimed to reexamine culture after the digital turn. For that forum, I shared some ideas about 'A re-turn to place-based practice of the arts for lifelong learning and creativity' (Butler, 2019). The third is today for the 1st International Conference on Art, Design, Education, and Cultural Studies at Universitas Negeri Malang. As our task is articulating art, design, and education to reinforce cultural sustainability in the disruptive era, I want to invite everyone to consider the potentials of AMDAL Kebudayaan (cultural environmental impact assessment).

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First, I must say that I am not a scholar who focuses on issues related to digital technologies. I am a dance-movement artist, teacher and cultural program director; who has collaborated with artists from the Americas, Europe and Asia for thirty-five years – sharing art in cultural and natural heritage sites to promote intercultural creative dialogue. I think about biocultural sustainability from the perspective of an arts practitioner and graduate of the *Kajian Budaya* Doctoral Studies Program at Universitas Udayana who tries to study from the creative know-how embedded in the arts of the past and present and to work cooperatively with colleagues to offer activities whereby the creativity of traditional and modern cultures can flourish together.

So, I will begin by briefly looking at some instances of disruption and the mid-1990s concept of disruptive technology or disruptive innovation. Then, reflect on the growing recognition of the linkages between biological and cultural diversity, particularly in terms of the sustainable development paradigm. In view of that, I will share some observations about the importance of taking into account the diversity of cultural environments in policies and in application.

## 2. Some Instances of Disruption

Seeing the term the ‘disruptive era’, brought to mind some recent happenings that impeded or halted an activity. For instance, five years ago I could stand at the gate of the home compound in the village where I reside and say hello to my neighbor across the road. Nowadays the movement and sounds of increased vehicular traffic still allows us to see each other; but we can only hear each other if speaking very loudly. In contrast, the telephone and now the ‘smart phone’ have extended social space such that people can hear and even see each other over great distances. Surely if everyone in this auditorium turned up the volume on their smart phone in this moment, we would hear a ‘click’, ‘beep’, ‘ping’, ‘ding’, ‘tick tick tick’ symphony of messages arriving from near and far. Some people might feel receiving these incoming communications is an advantage; others might feel these sounds are an intrusion into our present conversation.

The nature has also been ‘speaking’ strongly recently. Various phenomena such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, and hurricanes have disrupted the interactions among plants, animals, and human beings in both rural and urban areas. Some of the ways that people treat nature and each other have also caused disruptions such as: environmental degradation, human-instigated disasters, and outbreaks or threat of armed conflict.

And, as noted in the conference aims, changes in cultural processes have occurred due to a disruptive technology or disruptive innovation, which business management theorist Clayton M. Christensen described in the mid-1990s as a new technology, product, or service that suddenly overthrows an established technology in the market.

However, not all disruptions have detrimental outcomes. So, next, let us look at why innovations based on local knowledge related to biocultural diversity conservation can contribute to positive transformation.

### 3. Biocultural Diversity: A Key Aspect for Sustainable Development

The modern notion of a sustainable development paradigm, which emerged in the late 1980s, initially was comprised of the three 'pillars' of environmental, economic, and social sustainability; and eventually the fourth 'pillar' of cultural sustainability. One of the most encouraging orientations that has also arisen in local, regional, and international scientific communities is the consensus that the 'inextricable link' between biological and cultural diversity – now termed biocultural diversity – is a key aspect for sustainable development.

While the interrelatedness between people and the natural environment is still an integral part of the worldviews and cultural practices of most tradition-based communities in villages; recent studies have shown that it is also vital for the well-being of modernized communities in cities. Moreover, the interface of biological and cultural diversity has been correlated with the resilience of local communities and the capacity to adapt to changing conditions, which is also related to the ecological resilience of the Earth.

To understand why a biocultural approach is relevant for a sustainable development paradigm on a practical level, one might turn to these words of linguist-anthropologist, Luisa Maffi (2010, 19):

*What matters the most from a biocultural perspective is the very diversity of adaptive tools deployed by human societies in relation to the environment, and the continued intergenerational development, transmission and vitality of beliefs, values, institutions, knowledge, languages and practices relevant to human–environment relationships. From this, it follows that the main goal of a biocultural approach to sustaining life in nature and culture is to understand and support these adaptive tools, as well as the ability for these tools to develop from within their cultural context when new circumstances arise that require new adaptations.*

This is particularly applicable for Indonesia, which, as I have mentioned in several talks, is one of the top twelve ‘megadiversity’ countries in terms of biodiversity richness and the second most linguistically diverse (see Table 2.2 by Harmon, 1996 in Posey, 1999: 26), and thus is truly a biocultural diversity region.

The question is how can local communities identify challenges and which solution is best as well as predict the likely effects of a proposed action? So, let us now look at the role of an impact assessment.

#### 4. Some Practices of Impact Assessment

The notion of utilizing an impact assessment originated in the field of public policy in the late 1960s as a tool for ascertaining what might occur if an initiative, such as a new policy or action, is implemented. One of the earliest forms is the practice of environmental impact assessment, which evolved in response to the growing international concern about the impact of human activities on the biophysical environment.

However, initial forms of environmental impact assessment emphasized economic criteria. Next, a wider view gave rise to other practices of impact assessment such as social impact assessment, human health impact assessment and multi-forms including the three ‘pillars’ of environmental, economic and social well-being.

With the launching of the World Decade for Cultural Development (1988–1997), as former Secretary-General of the United Nations and President of the World Commission on Culture and Development Javier Pérez de Cuéllar (1995: 8) wrote in his foreword for “Our Creative Diversity”:

*Building cultural insights into the broader development strategies, as well as a more effective practical agenda, had to be the next step in rethinking development. ... New questions needed to be asked and old ones posed anew. What are the cultural and socio-cultural factors that affect development? What is the cultural impact of social and economic development? How are cultures and models of development related to one another? How can valuable elements of a traditional culture be combined with modernization? What are the cultural dimensions of individual and collective well-being?*

Accordingly, the practice of cultural impact assessment has been applied in combination with other forms to analyze what impacts an initiative may have on the cultural aspects of an environment, such as tangible and intangible cultural heritage, traditional natural resource and management systems, biocultural diversity, and the way of life,

knowledge systems, spiritual values, and creative practices of a cultural group or a community.

## 5. Potentials of AMDAL Kebudayaan

Returning to our task of articulating art, design, and education to reinforce cultural sustainability in the disruptive era, it is clear that we need to develop anticipatory creative thinking related to changes in bio-cultural processes arising from rapid technological change as well as to new needs.

Indonesia initiated the World Culture Forum, thus far held in 2013 and 2016, which as described in the Bali Declaration (see World Culture Forum, 2016) is a 'permanent platform for promoting the role of culture in sustainable development and the safeguarding of the cultural and linguistic diversity of humanity'.

Moreover, on 6 April 2018, thirty Indonesian culture experts and artists attended a friendship meeting initiated by the current president of the Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, at the Istana Merdeka (see Jordan, 2018). Among them were lecturer in sociology and poet Radhar Panca Dahana; actor Butet Kertaradjasa; and the founder of Padepokan Lemah Putih movement artist Suprpto Suryodarmo. Sitting together in the garden, Jokowi conveyed the importance of culture as a fundamental foundation of the nation and listened to the opinions and input from the artists and culture experts. Radhar felt that during the president's term thus far, 'material development has been extraordinary, especially in the field of infrastructure. In contrast, intangible development, the development of humanity is indeed lagging behind, and Jokowi is very aware of this. For that reason, the President will spend the remaining time of his presidency taking up the development of humanity'. Suryodarmo put forth the need for AMDAL Kebudayaan (cultural environmental impact assessment). Butet echoed this idea and noted that Jokowi was inspired by this input; especially with regard to AMDAL Kebudayaan and art education at the secondary school and academy levels.

So, it is inspiring to see that participants of this international conference at Universitas Negeri Malang are presenting papers that examine issues in diverse cultural environments of the Southeast Asian nations and aim to formulate innovative solutions. Thus, I would like to stress the value of mutual cooperation between local tradition-bearers and visiting artists, educators, and scholars; and to invite everyone to consider the potentials of AMDAL Kebudayaan (cultural environmental impact assessment) in policies and in application.

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