

**SOCIAL STRENGTHENING BASED ON ART ACTIVITIES IN
YOGYAKARTA, CASE STUDIES OF
TARING PADI AND KETJILBERGERAK**

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Abstract

The development of art cannot be separated from the social values that occur around it, including Yogyakarta, which has a long history and is deeply rooted in social realism. In its development, social values have a large portion in the development of art in Yogyakarta, so rooted, realism has always been a solid identity, although sometimes in different entities and discourses. Of course the spirit of the times takes a big role in representing the artworks that are present in one period. The emergence of groups that invite people to respond to cultural and social symptoms through works of art thrives in Yogyakarta, such as the Taring Padi and Ketjil groups, a few examples of artistic groups whose work approaches are very close to the community and even involve the surrounding community to play an active role in their work. Not only representing, but these groups are also involved as part of the community, fighting for it and educating the community to have a better quality of life, no longer oppressed and get social justice in society.

Keywords: Art activities; participatory art; Taring Padi; Ketjilbergerak;
Yogyakarta

Introduction

In the history of the development of modern art in Indonesia, many trends have arisen in the style of art that represents the spirit of the era. The appearance of Raden Saleh with his romantic style opened the way of view of modern art in Indonesia, with the influx of influences from the west, it gave new influences and views about art which were previously thick with the content of the spiritual tradition. After this period several movements and artists emerged that put forward the spirit of novelty that was characteristic of modernity but with an awareness to put forward strong local characteristics.

The enthusiasm to show a strong Indonesian identity is what then raises the spirit to describe the real reality in the surrounding environment, this manifestation then gave rise to social realism, a concrete art movement describing everything that exists and is real in its social environment, as expressed by Sudjojono, who called for the painter to depart from his own soul: painting is a visible soul (Hasan, 2001). It is from this social realism movement then moves and sustains the struggle of the Indonesian people during the colonial period, replacing the *mooi indie* movement which tends to merely portray the beauty of the scenery regardless of the social value of the surrounding community, Sudjojono believes that the search for a pure sense of local values about traditions that are not affected by the Dutch, as the invaders, will bring out the true value and essence of Indonesian art (Mildouho-Maldi, 1997), through an art institution called PERSAGI (Indonesian Drawing Experts Association), Sudjojono spreads the notion of social realism to all levels of society.



Figure 1: S. Sudjojono, *Guerrilla Preparation* (1964) (One of the works of social realism in Indonesia)

Source: <https://www.widewalls.ch/artist/s-sudjojono/>

Social realism grew and developed rapidly during the struggle and after independence. Many artists and communities who accept and adopt this style because attached to their struggles. Sudjojono even considers that realism is the only way of art that can be used to be understood by ordinary people, abstraction is the realism of the bourgeoisie while the people who still need rice, still need realism (Burham, 2013), so it is not surprising if there are many art institutions and art studios rooted in social realism in this medio, such as LEKRA (People's Culture Institute), an art institution that is closely related to populist political content, but after 1965 marked by regime changes from the Orde Lama to the Orde Baru there have been many changes, not least in the field of art. This political change made a significant change in the style of art artists, the government did not provide opportunities for social realism that was identical to the communist content through LEKRA, forcing artists to change their characteristics and point of view. In the period after 1965, the artists' attention to traditional forms was again glimpsed and processed into modern like abstract and expressionist paintings (Mildouho-Maldai, 1997), an approach and style that was previously sneered because it was considered too western. Not a few artists who are identical and are known as figures of social realism change their approach to expressionism such as Sudjojono and Affandi (Mildouho-Maldi, 1997).

Until the mid-1970s, government pressure was effective enough to silence the interest of artists to raise the issue of society, but that did not mean the movement of realism was stopped. The emergence of the New Art Movement (GSRB) slightly shifted the paradigm, consisting of STSRI ASRI Yogyakarta students who were the forerunners of the ISI Yogyakarta Faculty of Art, who held demonstrations and ended up being suspended by the campus, carried out movements by embracing Students from Bandung and Jakarta to do a breakthrough in art. These young artists began to explore by executing works of art outside the conventional medium that were not yet commonly used at that time and raised social values in their work, something that was avoided by artists at that time due to political upheaval.

Realism is a style that is already inherent as a style that can be appreciated and accepted by society, especially in Yogyakarta. Prevented like

anything, realism is a root that has been deeply rooted in the development of art in Yogyakarta, so it is not surprising that the realism transforms and explores with a different perspective. This movement was pioneered by young artists and STSRI ASRI students. Painting style based on realism but with a different approach began to develop, no longer just looking for the reality that was around but also included more imaginative elements and tended to lift local myths, as expressed by M. Dwi Marianto below:

"Surrealism in Yogyakarta painting in the 1980s grew in response to shifts in the practice of art and visual language that moved away from realism - this shift must be understood in terms of the historical background of Indonesia's political and cultural situation, especially the nature of rooted realism in the formation of modern art in Indonesia." (Marianto, 2001)

After this period, the concentration of art tended to return to social realism which emphasized the content of criticism of the government which was considered too authoritarian. The peak at the end of the Orde Baru's period, when artists united with all levels of society, especially students, shook government hegemony through works of art, the emergence of art-based communities that helped voice change and participate in political movements such as the Taring Padi group in Yogyakarta. Taring Padi promotes populist principles that encourage people to move against tyranny and injustices that occur in the surrounding environment, though not always, the process of art carried out by these groups tends to invite people to participate, play an active role and become part of the work process. The method used by Taring Padi also embraces an approach that is close and known to the people. A form of artistic activity that breaks the distance between the work and the reality it raises.

Art activities involving the community used by the Taring Padi group are also referred to as participatory art. Lisa Moran defines participatory art as a practice which places emphasis on the input and active reception of the audience for the physical or conceptual realization of the work (Moran, 2010). This process removes the role of artists as a single creator, but as a conductor that leads the audience to work together. As formulated by Bishop, participatory art eliminates single authorship by involving audiences directly in

the creative process. Artists position the audience as co-author, editor and observer of the collective work (Puspita, 2017).

After in the mid-2000s there were several art communities then grew up in Yogyakarta which actively involved the community, one of which was active enough was Ketjilbergerak. In contrast to Taring Padi which promotes propaganda that is critical of a hegemony that prevails in the social environment, Ketjilbergerak forward the process of art-based activities that prioritizes awareness about the potential of young people to play an active role in their social environment.

This will be the point of discussion in this article, about the development of the art community which focuses on the work process by involving the surrounding community or what is called participatory art. Many art communities emerged after 2000, but not many could maintain their existence for a long period of time and were rooted in participatory art activities. This paper will try to dissect the history, background and existence of Taring Padi and Ketjilbergerak, a community that is fairly active and still exists today. The location background originating from Yogyakarta is also a strong enough reason to illustrate how the roots of social realism that are quite strong in this city are transformed into a participatory art activity initiated by Taring Padi and Ketjilbergerak. The study method that will be used is a qualitative method with a group history approach, by looking at how the objectives of the activities carried out by Taring Padi and Ketjil move in carrying out the collaborative art process.

Taring Padi

Taring Padi was officially established on December 21, 1998, just a few months after the change of the New Order regime in Indonesia with its first president was Yustoni Voluntero. The name Taring Padi appeared publicly at a dangdut music concert at Gajah Mada University (UGM) before December 1998. Dodi Irwandi, a drummer from the Soekar Madjoe Malay Orchestra group who proposed and then agreed together. Taring Padi has a philosophy of depicting a fangs of rice grains that always fly and when it comes to the skin it gives itching, meaning that even though the activities

carried out by the Taring Padi group are small but it makes the itchy the authorities criticized, besides depicting rice grains also illustrates the characteristics of being light, which easily flies to other paddy fields and is able to make the growth of other rice grains more and give birth (Yusuf, 2018), a meaning of a small movement capable of arousing and encouraging people to speak out and act against injustice (Witjaksono, 2018).

At the beginning of its formation, the Taring Padi group used the former ISI Yogyakarta campus in Gampingan, Yogyakarta. The wide and strategic scope of the building makes it easier for members to act, make large amounts of work and make contact with other parties, especially those who share the same ideology about people's movements. It was not until 2003 that the group moved to the nearby ISI Yogyakarta campus in the Sewon area because the former campus building in Gampingan will become the National Jogja Museum. In this new place they named their headquarters with the name "Bilik Marsinah", Marsinah was the name of an activist and factory worker in Sidoarjo who was kidnapped and found dead in 1993 after missing for three days, this naming was an honor of Taring Padi for Marsinah's struggle, but it did not last long, a large earthquake that occurred in 2006 damaged their headquarters near the campus, this also forced the Taring Padi group to move to the location in the village of Sembungan, Mount Sempu which is more rural, an atmosphere that was felt right by the Taring Padi where they can be closer and blend directly with the people (Witjaksono, 2018).

The work process of Taring Padi is collective in nature which is done together in one work, a special uniqueness that distinguishes Taring Padi from other groups. In the process everything is done through discussions conducted by its members, from theme selection, material deepening, technical execution, forms of work and formation of work teams (Yusuf, 2018). The first work that was produced was the banner of removing the functions of ABRI at UGM which collaborated with the KPRP (Committee on the Struggle of the People for Change). The next collaborative work was the emergence of a poster series addressing the election in 1999 which was executed by the woodcut technique. The use of this technique is intended to be carried out by everyone even by the general public because its use tends to be easy.



Figure 2: Poster Series Addressing The General Election 1999

Source: *Taring Padi Bara Lapar Jadikan Palu p.48*

Besides the important activities of Taring Padi, which also changed the character and pattern of creation in the future with a tendency to go down directly to the community, also conducted in 1999 was to carry out the Memedi Sawah Festival involving the community, youth organizations and mobile NGOs in the Delanggu area, Solo. The purpose of this festival is to re-popularize organic rice planting techniques that have been pioneered by local residents as a counter to the inorganic rice planting patterns imposed by the Orde Baru's regime (Yusuf, 2018). From this experience Taring Padi is increasingly active in conducting art-based community activities in the years that followed, as they did in the Wonosobo, Porong Sidoarjo, Kulonprogo, Batang and several other regions.



Figure 3: Memedi Sawah's Festival

Source: *Taring Padi Bara Lapar Jadikan Palu* p.53

The art process carried out by Taring Padi uses many approaches and materials, such as woodcut, painting, song workshops, and cardboard puppets proven to be able to attract the interest of the community and move their interest in participating in the process of making works. Until now, after 20 years since they were established, Taring Padi is still actively mobilizing people to voice justice and humanity in their social environment through works of art.



Figure 4: Taring Padi's Cardboard Puppets

Source: *Taring Padi Bara Lapar Jadikan Palu* p.58

Ketjilbergerak

Ketjilbergerak is an independent art and cultural organization founded in 2006 by Sanata Dharma Yogyakarta students, namely Greg Sindana and Vani. At first they poured their anxieties and ideas from a *zine* (alternative print media) which contained writings on the campus aisle and in a public space that focused on art, philosophy and cultural studies. Then they felt that writing language was not enough to accommodate their aspirations, so that in 2008 they began executing their ideas through visual language, which was marked by the holding of a drawing exhibition at Beringin Soekarno, Sanata Dharma with the title "*Iconization of Cardboard*" followed by the next drawing exhibition entitled "*Unpredictable*" with the concept of Human, Spirituality and Science.

The Ketjilbergerak also expanded by expanding its membership, not only from Sanata Dharma students but also from various universities in Yogyakarta. The common vision that there is something wrong with the education system in Indonesia is the reason that motivates their movement. They also actively mobilize youth as an effort to instill awareness and also play an active role in building the surrounding environment. Ketjilbergerak also initiated various collaborative projects from 2009 to 2011, one example of which was the Nyawang exhibition (*Seeing with Open Hearts*) conducted in 2009, this was a collaboration of Ketjilbergerak with Griya Lentera PKBI Yogyakarta which involved several communities that were built, such as communities transvestites, prostitutes, homosexuals and street children. In addition, Ketjilbergerak also initiated a major project titled *Personal Oikumene* in 2011 which involved collaboration with seven artists, reading poetry and also performing music at Kersan Art Studio, Yogyakarta (Puspita, 2017). The education program is also an important agenda of Ketjilbergerak, held in the form of discussions and workshops, discussions were held by bringing together young people with leaders from various backgrounds and fields of science, such as arts, economics, culture and religion, here young people are invited to see from various kinds of viewpoints. While the workshop was carried out with the aim that young people have the provision of useful basic practical skills (Puspita, 2017).

Ketjilbergerak also took part in the activities of the Yogyakarta Arts Festival (FKY) which was held at the Ngasem Market Complex, Yogyakarta in 2013. The event was an art party aimed at introducing and showing the performing arts to the community. Through this kind of organization, Ketjilbergerak to try to provoke the public, especially youth, to be proactive in society. In the past few years, Ketjilbergerak has to focus on developing the creation of shared spaces, meeting rooms, learning spaces and dialogic spaces for elements in society as a medium of continuous communication.

In 2013, Ketjilbergerak also started a significant movement and focused its movement in the future. The project, called the Bocah Jogja Nagih Janji (BJNJ), mobilized young people from various villages in Yogyakarta to carry out the happening art center of the city of Yogyakarta to criticize the construction of the hotel on a massive and very expensive basis at that time. The large number of hotel developments carried out has a negative impact on the surrounding environment, both from the use of large-scale ground water, waste management and other social problems. From this activity, many of the Ketjilbergerak members later became activists in their respective villages and optimized the village's potential in the form of art. This activity then expanded and the movement of Ketjil moved not only around Yogyakarta, but also in several regions in Central Java, Banten and Malang.



Figure 5: Ketjilbergerak and Bocah Jogja Nagih Janji Performs

Source: <http://indonesiakreatif.bekraf.go.id/iknews/ketjilbergerak-yang-kecil-wani-obah/>

Through the previous discussion, it was written how the background stood and the work methods adopted by the Taring Padi and Ketjilbergerak. Although different approaches and narratives are adopted, the second process in involving the audience or the wider community is a special marker of the development of participatory art in Indonesia, especially in Yogyakarta. The root of social realism that is closely transformed into a complex art activity, not only represents the social life that occurs, but the society that is in the social sphere becomes part of the process of work and becomes part of the agent of change.

A process of awareness requires continuity and time to develop and awaken awareness to move to make changes, so that the artistic activities carried out by the two groups are like planting seeds of awareness to make changes. Ketjilbergerak, through art media to do this by fostering awareness that progress does not always have to come from urban areas, even small villages can advance and develop by developing the potential and superiority of each region, so that even distribution of population, education and economic growth can be optimized in some regions and not only in large urban centers. Even though there has not been a steady change, Ketjilbergerak and several other social communities have been able to change the mindset and point of view of rural communities, as evidenced by the emergence of small industries in the countryside that produce crafts, food products, and unique artwork from the village.

Taring Padi, who tends to engage in resistance activities encourages the community to fight the injustices that they get. Taring Padi educates the public to be more concerned and understand social issues such as land dispute issues, gender equality, environmental pollution, labor wages and so on through media such as illustrations, comics, essays, short stories, songs and poems. Some examples of the impact seen from Taring Padi's activities were being able to move the masses to refuse militarization of the national army against the community after the reform period, replanting rice-organic rice in the Delangu region, Solo, which had previously been banned by the New Order regime and fomenting community movements which pressure large industries to manage their waste without having a negative impact on the

surrounding environment. With this encouragement, the community becomes aware of the social inequalities that occur and wants to voice opinions to get their rights fairly.

As a city that has strong artistic roots, Yogyakarta has become one of the important poles in the history of Indonesian art. Many artists, curators and art thinkers from this city, even art events receive a warm welcome, not only from the art community but also from society in general. So it is not surprising that the discourse and discussion that developed in Yogyakarta is very complex and diverse. With the many exhibition events, art institutions, showrooms and also the number of art activists living in Yogyakarta, making the general public no longer feel alienated with artistic activities, art has become a part of everyday life, so it is not difficult to gather and invite community participation Yogyakarta to be actively involved in work.

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