

Optimizing performing arts innovations at the Ceprotan ceremony: An overview of the perspective of empowering rural communities in Pacitan, Indonesia



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received 2022-10-20

Revised 2022-11-27

Accepted 2022-12-26

Keywords

Performing arts innovations

Ceprotan ceremony

Empowering rural communities

ABSTRACT

Artistic research on community empowerment through artistic innovation in the Ceprotan Ceremony in Sekar Village aims to explain how the steps for optimizing performing arts innovations at the Ceprotan ceremony are through village community empowerment strategies. The initial step of this artistic research was carried out by direct observation to obtain data and information regarding the myths and practices of the Ceprotan Ceremony. In addition, to obtain more in-depth data, the researcher used the participant observer strategy and, at the same time, conducted in-depth interviews. The results of this investigation are then used by researchers to develop a community empowerment-based artistic innovation model. The results of this community empowerment-based artistic research are (1) systematic performance management; (2) the creation of social cohesion in the series of Ceprotan performances; (3) the identity of the village of Sekar is formed; (4) the revitalization of the Sekar Taji dance drama; (5) the reduction of bad events or trance (possession). The contribution of this research is an example for other regions that want to use artistic innovation as the formation of village identity and, at the same time, as an effort to complement and advance the cultural potential of Sekar Village.



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1. Introduction

The Ceprotan Ceremony in Sekar Village, Pacitan Regency, is a form of gratitude for the village community for the abundant agricultural produce. The Ceprotan ceremony really appreciates the source of spring. For the local community, the spring is a vital village asset which is sacred because it is able to increase the village's agricultural output so that it can resist reinforcements. For the village community, the practice of the Ceprotan ceremony is a means of opening up opportunities for the rural art community to appear in the midst of this sacred event so that the sacred moment becomes a creative event that is used to introduce the potential of village art to the wider community. The involvement of social organizations and charismatic figures in Sekar Village is important figure that contributes to encouraging sacred events and, at the same time, events of the creative talents of the village community in maintaining the sustainability of the ceremony. According to Joko Aswoyo *et al.*, charismatic figures are *panutan* (role models) who guide village communities to build self-confidence [1]. The *panutan* (role model) concept offered by Joko Aswoyo *et al.* can be found in the arts community in Sekar Village. The role of *panutan* (role models), or charismatic figures in Sekar village, is able to encourage the emergence of an awareness of the arts community in innovating values that exist in the midst of village communities, such as the values of mutual cooperation, harmony, and togetherness which are embodied in innovative traditional performing arts offerings, and this can be seen from the diversity of art displayed at the Ceprotan ceremony.

The phenomenon that is found in the field is the practice of sending social organizations to rural areas in community empowerment programs to become one of the professional strengths capable of providing community services, and this research sees that there is a fairly systematic and constructive pattern that leads to the accelerated process of promoting the revitalization of rural community artistic talent. This pattern cannot be separated from the involvement of national policies, local governments, and universities, which actively provide guidance to rural communities through community empowerment programs to promote village creative resources to urban communities [2]. In helping rural communities, most social organizations use the "eat, live together, work together" approach as an effort to consolidate village community social capital [3], as well as build social integration and establish mutual trust [4]. Seeing the involvement of social organizations from outside the village in promoting/supporting the development of performing arts innovations [5], this study aims to explain how the steps for optimizing performing arts innovations at the Ceprotan ceremony are through village community empowerment strategies.

There are quite a lot of similar studies that explain how the role of community empowerment is carried out in helping rural communities in developing their regions. In Vietnam, community empowerment is an important component of sustainable tourism. Research conducted by Dung Thi Ngoc Nguyen *et al.* in villages often stems from their dependence on the government, especially in top-down political systems, as well as the strong framing of knowledge associated with formal education. Dung Thi Ngoc Nguyen revealed that if the strength of the village community is well recognized, then the opportunity to improve the welfare of the village community can provide significant results. According to the results of his research, this recognition has the potential to change the experience of local communities and, at the same time, encourage the emergence of strength from within the community and their community, as well as encourage the emergence of the inner strength of rural communities in solving life's problems [6]. Village community empowerment also provides opportunities for the emergence of a variety of creative industries, for example, those based on performing arts, as happened in Sekar Village research by Qingfang Wang *et al.* Explaining this, Qingfang Wang conducted research with a focus on issues of art and cultural entrepreneurship in traditional communities. According to him, there are many art and cultural products that are underserved, so the interaction between creative agents and local communities is not well established. Qingfang Wang's findings call for a social impact approach that emphasizes the importance of cultural production that is formed in an inclusive manner so as to strengthen the creative industry entrepreneurial ecosystem in rural communities [7].

In Guizhou, China, the cultural inheritance of marginalized communities is researched by William Nitzky. The research discusses the implementation of a community-based participatory approach and interrogates cultural heritage as a strong site that is maintained by the community. The results of William Nitzky's research show that the involvement and management of multiple actors in each cultural heritage project are able to create a political space in which claims and interpretations regarding cultural heritage, identity, and voice compete and are negotiated, and villagers are confronted with new roles in the wider context of transformation—the Chinese economy, society and politics [8]. In rural Australia, governments, communities and policymakers are looking for ways to empower local people to develop local solutions to local challenges. Julia Anwar McHenry conducted research on this matter by examining the role of art as a vehicle for increasing social and civic participation to build resilience against injustice. According to Julia Anwar McHenry, art can be used to encourage community participation and provide opportunities for them to build social interactions and networks for the welfare of remote rural residents. Julia Anwar McHenry's research results note that the implementation and encouragement of art activities and events are highly dependent on the availability of human resources and support from governance and funding authorities to build the capacity to sustain their activities. Julia Anwar McHenry offers other researchers to carry out further research to support claims that the future of sustainable support is not only for the arts but also for the capacity of society to engage in works of art [9], and this study wants to see how the community is involved in the process of producing works of art.

Ceprotan culture, which is the focus of this study, provides information that community involvement in performance events and creative activities is a form of their struggle to build social inclusiveness. The rural arts empowerment program is one of the strategies for overcoming social inequality [10], as well as an effort to increase self-esteem and open up opportunities to increase rural economic potential [11]. Art products that are presented as a result of community assistance and

empowerment do not provide the highest artistic standard of service but rather an effort to forge a combination of inclusion and to bring rural communities to a better understanding of the meaning of art in their lives [12]. This research on optimizing performing arts innovations at the Ceprotan ceremony will significantly contribute to opening up dialogue spaces for rural art communities as well as becoming a means of distributing creative ideas and ideas for rural communities to develop their artistic talents and abilities, which are often neglected. Conceptually, this research will offer steps for community empowerment with the concept of a rural performing arts innovation network. In the future, it is hoped that other researchers can continue this study into deeper issues, namely regarding the impact of rural performing arts innovation on urban communities and the implications for the creation of new forms of media expression.

2. Method

The community empowerment process begins with direct observation of the people of Sekar Village, Donorejo District, and Pacitan Regency. Long before participating in the Real Work Lecture (KKN) program organized by the Surakarta Indonesian Art Institute (ISI Surakarta), the researcher had been involved with residents of Sekar Village in art activities, gaining an understanding of the complexity and potential of art. culture in the village. In addition, researchers have continued to monitor this behaviour since the end of the KKN period. This was woven by researchers as a direct and continuous observation activity in an effort to broaden knowledge of the potential for the development of Sekar Village. To obtain data and information about the myths and practices of the Ceprotan Ceremony, researchers often visit Sekar Village and establish friendships with the village head, village officials, and village residents.

The gathering is a way for researchers to make direct observations [13], such as attending the Ceprotan Ceremony directly; this will provide an in-depth understanding of how the ceremony is carried out, the processes involved, and how villagers are involved in the ceremony. Direct observation also helps the process of social interaction and cultural context [14] around the ceremony. The interview technique was carried out to obtain primary data related to the Ceprotan ceremony activities; interviews were conducted with the village head, village officials, and village residents; this method was used to obtain their perspective on the Ceprotan Ceremony. At this stage also asked about the origin, meaning, purpose, and changes that might occur in the ceremony. In order to make the questions more systematic, a list of questions was prepared beforehand to ensure that all important data requirements were not missed [15].

Since then, the involvement of researchers has become quite close, and researchers have had the opportunity to participate in the Ceprotan Ceremony development activities. As a result of the community's familiarity with the researcher, the researcher is trusted to participate in community empowerment activities in the village. The closeness of the researcher to the local population, which is quite good, provides an opportunity to collect motivational data and reasons why creative innovations are applied to Ceprotan celebrations. This investigation was carried out by identifying the village's potential and asking local residents how they could maximize the village's artistic potential. Researchers then use the results of this investigation to offer various forms of artistic innovation to complement and advance the cultural potential of Sekar Village, which does not only focus on the art of dance but on various things that can be managed and promoted to a wide audience within the framework of the Ceprotan Ceremony ritual celebration. Some of the observation steps carried out by the researcher were offering dance training or inviting the village community to return to dancing activities, inviting musicians to join art activities in Sekar Village, and mobilizing the villagers to grow their existing potential to be brought and manage in a collaborative manner which will be used to enliven the Ceprotan Ceremony.

3. Results and Discussion

The Ceprotan ceremonial ritual is an art icon for the people of Sekar Village. Even so, the condition of Sekar Village, which is located at the end of the city border and is quite remote, makes Sekar Village a village that is left behind in terms of facilities and infrastructure. Access to the village is difficult to reach because of its remote location, which is at the end of the border of Donorojo District, which makes people outside Sekar Village tend rarely stop by or stop by this village. Moreover, in Sekar Village, it is a blank area which cannot access development and progress like other regions. This

means that Sekar Village does not have adequate internet access. This is because Sekar Village is far from the internet or cellular services. The impact of this limited access has made Sekar Village on the verge of being left behind compared to other areas in Pacitan Regency. The obstacles experienced by Sekar Village residents include; (1) the distance between Sekar Village and other villages, which is quite far; (2) Sekar Village seems to be isolated from other villages, so socialization or social interaction with other village communities is difficult; (3) Sekar Village is also one of the villages experiencing difficulties in accessing the internet network and communication technology, which is basically a very vital need in the current internet era. One of the efforts in the field of arts and culture to respond to the conditions faced by the people of Sekar Village, in this case, is by innovating art by renewing and exploring more deeply the potential of Sekar Village for the Ceprotan ceremony so that the village community is more empowered and builds connectivity with the region other.

The author's thinking in carrying out artistic innovation efforts is based on Barnett's opinion that culture provides a framework in which innovation is stimulated or suppressed, even various internal incentives for innovation to occur within a cultural framework. According to him, there is "credit will", which refers to the desire of some individuals to bring credit to themselves, initiating various changes. According to Barnett, the drive for creativity itself is expressed as a "creative will". "Desire of relief and avoidance" refers to desirable changes in existing conditions because the individual experiences physical or mental discomfort under certain conditions [16]. Some changes are accepted because the existing mechanism is not enough to provide something of value; through this process, an innovative process can occur within a complete cultural framework of society [17]. The urge to innovate in art can arise from physically or mentally uncomfortable conditions so that a person or group of people innovates for the common good and progress of life through art movements [18]. Exploring village potentials is material to be explored and a provision for innovation. This is what the author does in innovating art at the Seprotan Ceremony performance.

The life of the village community, with the majority working in farming, gives Sekar Village residents a strong sense of togetherness, a sense of complementarity and mutual cooperation. This practice is used in everyday life and in village organizational activities. Every village activity and event always uses the mutual cooperation method so that problems can be resolved quickly and easily. The way of working together and mutual respect can have an impact on community development, and this way of collaboration makes all social problems can be resolved quickly and easily. The implementation of the value of *gotong royong* in people's lives contains the meaning of equality, justice, togetherness, and caring, as well as alluding to common interests. Therefore, *gotong royong* contains a very strong element of empowerment [19], see Fig. 1.



Fig. 1. *Gotong royong* in Ceprotan ceremony

Discussions and meetings are always held and have become a routine in this village in order to achieve the goals of environmental events and activities. All of this is done for good and towards a better and quality village. In people's lives, there are always procedures and efforts to bring about change because they are constantly trying to meet needs and solve social problems [20]. This means that in social life, it turns out that nothing really happens stagnation, but there is always a process and change either towards bad or good things [21]. In this process, new cultural forms or arts, ceremonies

and other forms of community activity are born. This also happened in Sekar Village, which in the end, gave rise to forms of cultural activity of togetherness and mutual cooperation. Departing from the mutual cooperation activities carried out by the residents of Sekar Village, a form of art packaging was born, which is held annually as an annual commemoration called Ceprotan. By the people who own the culture, this ceremony is considered a sacred ceremony. This Ceprotan art is the root of the cultural development that occurred in the village of Sekar. The initial form of Ceprotan in ancient times was a sacred ceremony without any show packaging.

The sacred ceremony that took place in ancient times was accompanied by myths or stories about the origin of the spring in Sekar Village. This spring is known and trusted by local residents as the forerunner to the birth of Sekar Village. In the daily life of the people of Sekar Village, stories circulate that are believed and passed down from generation to generation until now. Once upon a time, there was a Princess of Kediri who went on a journey to find her husband, who had disappeared for a long time. On her way to find her husband, the Princess of Kediri accidentally met a wandering young man. Tracing the story of the local community, the princess felt very thirsty because she had travelled a long way. Because he could not bear to see the Princess feel thirsty, the wandering youth gave the young coconut to the Princess. The Princess also felt very happy and grateful to have met such a good person. As a form of gratitude, the Princess then spilt the rest of the young coconut water she drank onto the ground around the Princess' resting place. Accompanied by the Princess's supernatural powers, a spring appears that comes out of the place where the Princess spilt the remaining coconut water. The myth of the emergence of this spring is a sign of the commemoration of the annual sacred ceremony now known as Ceprotan.

3.1. Series of Ceprotan Ceremonies

The Ceprotan Ceremony by the people of Sekar Village was held in the month of Dzulqaidah (*Longkang*), to be precise, on Monday (*Senin Kliwon*). The series of Ceprotan Ceremonies begins with cleaning the spring, which is carried out in the morning. Until now, the spring is well maintained. It does not have to be just during the Ceprotan Ceremony, either. On an ordinary day, the local people sometimes clean this spring. After cleaning the water source, an offering ceremony was carried out by the residents of Sekar Village. The offerings are collected in a large area which is then arranged and distributed among the residents. However, there are also special offerings that will be used in the Ceprotan Ceremony in the form of mountains. After the offerings were distributed, an art performance was held, which presented some of the artistic potentials of the local residents. This art performance seems very random and not neatly arranged. Only people who want just want to participate in performing arts. One of the targets for community empowerment is the performance management system which is felt at this ceremony still needs to be improved. In addition, a dance drama entitled *Sekartaji* was also held. This dance drama tells the story of *Sekartaji*'s meeting with *Ki Godeg*. *Sekartaji* is a man from Kediri, while *Ki Godeg* is a traveler. They met precisely in the village of Sekar. It is said that *Sekartaji* was travelling looking for her husband. On his way, *Sekartaji* felt very thirsty. *Ki Godeg* was finally helped by giving him a young coconut. In the dance drama, it is told that to take the young coconut, *Ki Godeg*, with his supernatural powers, penetrated the ground until he reached the beach and took the young coconut. After the young coconut was given to *Sekartaji*, he then drank it but did not finish it. *Sekartaji* put the remaining coconut water in the hole *Ki Godeg* used to penetrate the ground. Finally, become a source of water now.

After the art performance was finished, the main event was opened with a series of welcoming events and committee reports. Apart from that, there was also a brief historical explanation about the Ceprotan Ceremony delivered by village elders who are familiar with the Ceprotan Ceremony. The special offerings for the Ceprotan Ceremony are then paraded to the main location of the Ceprotan Ceremony. The procession of these offerings is also accompanied by a procession of young coconuts, which will be used to perform Ceprotan. This young coconut has been cleaned, and the hard outer part removed. This procession starts from the Village Hall to the place where the Ceprotan Ceremony is held. The coconuts that were paraded earlier are usually put in a woven basket. After the coconuts have arrived at the Ceprotan Ceremony, a joint prayer is then held, led by the older customary leader in Sekar Village. This prayer uses the Javanese language, and there is also a prayer in the Islamic way, which reads several verses of the Koran. After reading the prayer, the village youths were divided into two camps and occupied the places that had been prepared. The coconut, whose outer shell had softened, was then divided into two according to the number of youth camps. After all the preparations, members of both camps started throwing young coconuts that were lying in front of them. Anyone

who is stoned until the coconut that is thrown breaks and the water wets his body is considered a person who will receive an abundant fortune. After all the coconuts are used up, the throwing of coconuts which is called Ceprotan, ends with a prayer. At the end of the Ceprotan event, a short dance was also performed to accompany the youths out of the Ceprotan Ceremony arena.

3.2. Community Empowerment in Ceprotan Ceremony Performance Management

The limited level of education and limited art knowledge of the people of Sekar Village, coupled with the geographical conditions of the area in the form of unfavourable mountains, have made it difficult for the village arts to develop. In line with that, Sarah states that education for a child is not important, but what is more important is how a child contributes to the field of production [22]. This is the author's reference for inviting community members and children to be involved in the Ceprotan Ceremony. The first step taken by the author was to research the potential of Sekar Village, especially in the field of art. Sekar Village, which consists of 10 hamlets, has several arts that can be performed as part of the Ceprotan Ceremony. Some of the arts owned by Sekar Village are the *Jenggolo Laras*, *Gejuk Lesung*, *Langen Beksan* Dance, *Gambyong*, *Reyog*, Shadow Puppets, and *Solawat Terbang*, which are found in almost all hamlets. Of all the existing arts, coordination is then carried out, and the order of presentation is arranged so that it is neater and conceptualized. In this case, the author only accompanies and provides input to residents to arrange everything related to the show. Exploring the potential of the village and performing it in the Ceprotan Ceremony aims to maintain the existence of this art and to inspire art groups to continue creating. Apart from that, the Ceprotan Ceremony can become an art showcase that can be used as a promotional space for the continuation of artistic life. Perhaps when the art groups performed at the Ceprotan Ceremony, people would know about them and might summon them to perform at other events.

3.3. Performance Innovation of Sekartaji Dance Drama in Ceprotan Ceremony

According to the writer, there was a misinterpretation regarding the two characters in the story, which had been performed previously. This misinterpretation is found in the character of Ki Godeg. According to data developed in Sekar Village, Ki Godeg is Panji Asmara Bangun, who is none other than Sekartaji's husband. After the writer conducted research and visited several accurate sources, it turned out that the character who was thought to be Panji Asmara Bangun was actually Ki Godeg. After getting the data, the author finally tries to explain to residents and community leaders to correct this misunderstanding. From the interview process with accurate sources, in fact, there were some residents who knew that the story that was developing was a misinterpretation. However, they lacked confidence and did not dare to share what they knew. This gradually happened until the writer came to Sekar Village. Some residents who have obeyed the truth find it helpful when the writer dares to reveal the truth of the story that happened. Of course, with accurate data. The people of Sekar Village were immediately shocked and tried to clarify whether the story that had been developing in Sekar Village was incorrect. Residents then tried to believe it and tried to change the storyline of the dance drama during the Ceprotan Ceremony. This change also occurred when the writer did it during the 2014 KKN. The writer also rearranged the sequence of the dance drama round by act so that the story is correct and can be conveyed to the wider community properly. Until now, the version of the Sekartaji dance drama has been straightened out and the sequence of the scenes is still being carried out.

There is something unique that happens when changing the version of the story and rearranging the sequence of scenes in the dance drama Sekartaji which may be a little far from scientific reasoning, but it happened. This unique incident is that residents do not get bad things and are possessed. Before changing the story version of the Sekartaji dance drama, it often happened that when they were going to hold the Ceprotan Ceremony or when they were holding the ceremony, there must be people who had bad things like death, and there were also those who were possessed. After changing the story version of the Sekartaji dance drama, this did not happen again. The residents of Sekar Village realized this incident only after holding the Ceprotan Ceremony for the third time. Until now, this bad incident and possession have not happened again. Based on the dancer's background, the author made several arrangements for the flow of the show to become more conceptual. When viewed from the point of view of movement before the writer made the arrangement, usually the people who danced were careless, and the plot was not clear, and they were only concerned with the role of Sekartaji. The dance movements given to the residents by the author are also adjusted to the capacity of the dancers and do not force them to make perfect movements. The most important thing is that the dance moves become more organized and interesting. Innovation Serving the drama Sekartaji dance is done by adding a

touch of properties such as young coconut and *tenggok* (basket made of woven bamboo). The addition of the *tenggok* property has a philosophy that the majority of Sekar Village residents are farmers. *Tenggok* is usually used as a place to produce crops when Sekar Village residents harvest. At the same time, the young coconut is intended to strengthen Ceprotan's dish; that young coconut is the cause of the emergence of spring in Sekar Village.

The researcher also made a touch in composing music to accompany the performance of the Sekartaji dance drama. Researchers added Lesung, Kentongan, and Gamelan. Lesung was added to composing the music because, in Sekar Village, there are many who still use the mortar to pound rice. Meanwhile, Kentongan was added to the music composition because Pacitan is very famous for *ronthek's* art. Gamelan is used as a musical accompaniment to dance accompaniment. Making music is also lighter and simpler so that it is easy to memorize and adapt to the capacity of the people of Sekar Village. The touches made by the Researcher without changing the essence of the sacredness of the Ceprotan Ceremony. The researcher hopes that with this performance innovation, the people of Sekar Village will become empowered and be able to independently pass on some of the research ideas that have been conveyed to the community. Even so, of course, it is possible that the production of the Sekartaji dance drama will experience other innovations both in terms of dance and musical accompaniment. The most important thing is that all the innovations that may occur and be carried out do not change the essence of the sacredness of the Ceprotan Ceremony.

4. Conclusion

Community empowerment through artistic innovation in the Ceprotan Ceremony in Sekar Village is carried out through mapping research on the potential that exists in the village. The potentials in Sekar Village cover the field of performing arts and the potential of a group of residents who understand art management. The author offers residents to reorganize the Ceprotan Ceremony series starting with the management system, the form of performing arts, and the flow of the Sekartaji dance drama performance. Residents of the Sekar Village community became the main figures in the improvement of the Ceprotan Ceremony, while the author only acted as a companion. The things that the author does include pouring into the development of art and extracting the potential results of the community, helping the community to grow self-confidence in exploring the potential in each region, realizing community creativity in identifying areas and resources that can be explored, and providing a knowledge base with the Ceprotan art venue as a means of socializing between village communities for the benefit of art and culture promotion, and developing the Ceprotan Ceremony into an interesting performance to learn about and making this ceremony the identity of Sekar Village, which contains the potential results of the community. More specifically, the results felt by the people of Sekar Village are (1) the management of the Ceprotan Ceremony series of events is more organized, (2) the involvement of art groups in Sekar Village makes them more passionate about art and is recognized in existence, (3) the Ceremony Ceprotan has become the identity of Sekar Village and has become a showcase for cultural arts which can be a promotional space for artistic potentials in Sekar Village, (4) the Sekartaji dance series can be straightened round by round, (5) the reduction of bad incidents and possessions, and (6) Sekar Village is becoming better known.

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