

Achieving Sustainable Future through Indigenous People: The Case of Weaver Community in South Pringgasela, West Nusa Tenggara

Anggina Marinda Putri^{a,*}, Retno Kusumastuti^a

^aUniversitas Indonesia

Abstract

This article discusses weave fabric as one of the potential industrial development areas in East Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. The discussion conducted by looking at indigenous people as resources that need to be maintained. Indigenous people are native people of an area or natives who keep up the indigenous knowledge as local wisdom of the area. Lombok has woven fabric as a valuable cultural heritage. In the beginning, many villages in Lombok developed various kinds of weaving. However, due to the development of the village's territory, few were able to survive and some had even become extinct due to the declining number of weavers. This is what had led to the establishment of a group of weavers in South Pringgasela. Although in the beginning the establishment of the weaver community was intended to ease the weavers in selling their weaving products, the weaver community eventually became a weaving information center for anyone who wants to learn about weaving. This step will meet success if the surrounding indigenous community were to actively carry it out. A sustainable result is achieved because it is rooted in the weaver community itself. This study employed mixed methods and collected data by using questionnaires, observations and in-depth interviews.

Keywords: indigenous people, indigenous knowledge, local wisdom, weaver community cultural heritage, sustainability

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known to have a diversity of flora and fauna, religion, ethnicity, culture, language, and other natural resources. Indonesia won the title as a country with the most number of ethnic groups in the world (Indriani, 2015). Indonesia is a multicultural country that is home to numerous indigenous peoples from Sabang to Merauke. According to a BPS survey in 2010, Indonesia has 300 ethnic groups and 1,340 tribes spread throughout the Indonesian archipelago (Denura, 1999). Each region has values derived from their ancestors that can be highlighted as a potential area for development. So, it is necessary to explore these potentials to create values to achieve a competitive advantage (Huseini, 2010).

East Lombok is one of the ten cities in the Province of West Nusa Tenggara. East Lombok consists of 20 sub-districts and 254 villages. Pringgasela is one of the sub-districts in East Lombok and is the fifth largest area (BPS, 2018). One of the industrial development potentials in East Lombok is the craft cen-

ter which is spread evenly in several sub-districts (BPS, 2018). As for the dominant and well-known craft centers, one of them is the weaving fabric center. This weaving fabric is a cultural heritage product of Indonesia that must be preserved as it has distinctive characteristics when compared to fabrics from other neighboring countries. Some popular traditional fabrics of neighboring countries that have distinct cultural characteristics are hanbok from Korea and kimono from Japan.

The Ministry of Industry of the Republic of Indonesia has issued a policy to encourage the growth of the industrial sector as the main driver in increasing national economic growth. In the National Industrial Development Master Plan (RIPIN), the policy is mandated to develop and utilize industrial technology to improve efficiency, productivity, added value, competitiveness and independence in the industry (Kementerian Perindustrian, 2016). The development of the industrial sector does not only relate to building factories and product marketing, but systems also need to be set in place so that the industry can develop independently within the economic structure of the local community. In addition to its function in industrial development, the weaving fabric center also has great potential for cultural tourism in Lombok. Cultural tourism, which presents an attraction in the form of cultural aspects developing in the community, includes the traditional village called Bale Tenun. This is particularly beneficial since West Nusa Tenggara, especially

* Author in correspondence,

Email address: angginamp@gmail.com (Anggina Marinda Putri),
rekusuma@yahoo.com (Retno Kusumastuti)

East Lombok, has a specific target market, namely tourists both domestic and international. Therefore, weaver communities like Bale Tenun require great support that will undoubtedly be beneficial for the existence of weavers.

2. METHODS

To obtain a complete picture of the social phenomena, the data collection process was comprehensively carried out. A survey was conducted to collect quantitative data by distributing questionnaires to the weaver community, while qualitative data was obtained by conducting direct observations/site visits to the weaver community and in-depth interviews with informants from the government, representatives of weaver community, representatives of Non-Government Organization (NGO) groups that assist the weaver group, as well as local community leaders. All of them have been informed about informed consent. The questionnaire was prepared based on indicators from previous studies on indigenous knowledge. Then the researchers conducted interviews with the West Nusa Tenggara Regional Trade Office, East Lombok Regional Industry and Trade Office, the Head of the Nine Weavers Group, Members of the Nine Weavers Group, Members of Non-Government Organization (NGO) Gema Alam and local community leaders in South Pringgasela. The criteria of the informants were that they have a good understanding of the weave fabric center; have a good understanding of the industrial process of the development of the weave fabric center; have experience working as a weaver; have a good understanding of local culture and values; and have a good understanding of the policy context related to the weave fabric industry in East Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara Province.

3. RESULTS

Gedogan weave fabric is one of Lombok's cultural heritages. Being widespread in South Pringgasela, Gedogan is made using traditional looms. The modern loom is rarely used by weavers, as it requires special expertise and is also expensive equipment requiring a sufficiently large area for its placement. However, the main reason is actually that weavers prioritize the quality of weaving products so they choose to use traditional methods that can make the fabrics last up to tens of years. Furthermore, this made the weavers focus more on pursuing the cultural value of the weave fabric that they produce. This is in line with the information provided by the informants that weaving activities were considered by weavers as the identity of the village its from. However, it was later found that there is a problem with the lack of human resources.

This is important because most of the weavers in South Pringgasela are women. Moreover, young people in East Lombok are rarely able to weave, so the resources they have are limited. Such a tendency of low human resources raises the need for those who have the desire to learn to weave to be provided proper guidance. At the community level, the learning process occurs under situations that are full of uncertainty

and problematic changes (Johansson, 2013). This grand theory refers to the conception presented by Bandura (1977) in Johansson (2013), which states that this social learning process is a process of learning by individuals through their observation of others as well as their engagement in social or group interactions. Such learning activity will, in turn, generate social innovation. One of the efforts made is to involve students directly. Based on information obtained from an informant, the local community leader, South Pringgasela has currently begun to include weaving as a subject at school. The support given is meant to provide knowledge about weave fabric since their time as students. Such an effort was made to develop a sense of caring for maintaining weave fabric. It is done to preserve the weavers. However, preservation cannot be carried out en masse, and there are still observers who maintain the awareness for preserving weave fabric. One of the efforts carried out is by establishing Bale Tenun. The reason for the establishment of Bale Tenun is due to the concern for weavers, who experience challenges in marketing their weaving products. A group of weavers in Bale Tenun is known as 'Nine'. The word 'Nine' literally means woman. The weavers in South Pringgasela are mostly women and most of them consider weaving as a side task after performing their household activities. As of current, active weavers are aged forty years and over. Rarely do young people from South Pringgasela want to weave. Whereas in the past, around 1960 and prior, if a girl could not weave, she could not marry. There is even an assumption that the more weave fabric a woman produces, the more powerful she will be. The decreasing number of weavers is ultimately a threat that must be addressed.

Bale Tenun is now being developed to facilitate sales so that results are maximized. Initially, Bale Tenun activities were only limited to getting weavers to convene and to provide them an understanding of the usefulness of Bale Tenun. It should be noted that many weavers aged up to seventy-five years old need a long time to learn. Even from ten participating weavers, only three to five weavers stayed. The group subsequently holds a monthly meeting to discuss the problems that exist in their field and to provide information about product development. At first, the weavers did not respond as expected. They only wanted to know one thing, namely the certainty whether their products have been sold or not. Therefore, the Nine Group collaborated with the Gema Alam Non-Governmental Organization to gradually guide the weavers. Until eventually, Bale Tenun was established as a place of learning, and not merely a venue to place their products. The Nine Weaver Group is very open to anyone wanting to learn to weave, including tourists, through the Eduwisata program for tourists interested in learning to weave while enjoying their vacation.

Traditional knowledge (or other coterminous terms such as indigenous knowledge and local knowledge) refers to the long-standing information, wisdom, traditions retained and practices performed by certain indigenous peoples and local communities. Indigenous knowledge has been verbally passed down for generations from one person to another. Some forms of traditional knowledge are expressed through stories, legends, folklore, cultural values, beliefs, rituals, songs, art, and even

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE



Figure 1: Indigenous Knowledge among the Nine Weaver group in South Pringgasela, West Nusa Tenggara

community laws, the local language, and agricultural practices, including the development of plant species and animal breeds (Nation, 2014). According to Emery (2000) in Haverkort and Reijntjes (2010), indigenous knowledge represents the accumulated experience, wisdom and know-how unique to cultures, societies, and communities of people, living in an intimate relationship of balance and harmony with their local environments. In other words, indigenous knowledge passed on from one generation to the next does not only include verbally transmitted knowledge but those that are passed down through various conducted actions as well.

Based on Figure 1, there is information about whether the learning process is taking place. The measure of indigenous knowledge is known by using eight statements, namely the following: there are values and knowledge based on local wisdom in the traditional fabrics; the local community plays an active role in sharing knowledge related to fabric making; fabric making knowledge is obtained from the previous generation; my fabric making knowledge is passed down to the next generation; traditional fabric design shows the origin of the local area; the use of traditional fabrics depends on the social status of the weaver; the use of traditional fabrics varies depending on the event; and the process of making traditional fabrics must be based in nature or natural processes (such as using natural dyes, drying in the sun, etc). Based on the results of answers provided by the respondents, the data shows that as much as 4% of respondents stated that there is no indigenous knowledge, while the other 96% stated that there is indigenous knowledge. Furthermore, Bale Tenun is a family business and it has a clear organizational structure and organizational rules set in place. The main aim of the establishment of Bale Tenun is to ease the weavers in marketing the weaving through online media. Weaver members can later interact directly with customers through online media, and they can also benefit from networking which in the end may have a positive impact on increasing the number of weavers.

4. DISCUSSION

The term ‘indigenous’ has been used as a general term for many years. However, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues promotes the idea of “identifying” over the idea of “defining” indigenous peoples. Instead, the United Nations has developed the following criteria to give an understanding of indigenous peoples. According to these criteria, indigenous people: self-identify themselves as indigenous people at the person level and are accepted by the community as indigenous; show historical continuity with precolonial and/or pre-settler societies; have a strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources; have distinct social, economic or political systems; have a distinct language, culture, and beliefs; form a non-dominant group of society, and resolve to support and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities. Even though there is no official definition of ‘indigenous’, there are still other terms used including ethnic groups, first people/nations, aboriginals, ethnic groups, *adivasi*, *janajati*, or peoples who practice unique traditions, keep up different social, cultural, economic and political attributes.

Meanwhile, sustainability is a dynamic equilibrium in the process of interaction between a population and the carrying capacity of its environment such that the population develops to express its full potential without producing irreversible, adverse effects on the carrying capacity of the environment upon which it depends (Eli Ben, 2015). This definition refers to the conception of sustainable development from the UN (1987) in University of Alberta Office of Sustainability (n.d.) which states that sustainable development is “development that meets current needs without reducing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” and has the aim to support economic progress while protecting long-term environmental values, that provides a framework for the integration of environmental policies and development strategies.

According to the United Nations, indigenous peoples are holders of a unique language, various systems of knowledge and trust, and they also have invaluable knowledge of the practice. They have a special relationship with and use of their traditional land. Their ancestral lands have fundamental importance for their physical and collective cultural survival as humans. Indigenous peoples have their diverse development concepts, based on their traditional values, vision, needs, and priorities. It can, thus, be said that the main characteristic of indigenous people is having an attachment to the environment which is expressed by values and culture rooted in the environment in managing sustainable natural resources. Until now, people along with future generations have played a major role in developing environmental conditions. Indigenous people often claim that their knowledge is inseparable from the natural and cultural context within which it has arisen, including their traditional lands and resources, and their kinship and community relations (Kothari, 2007).

5. CONCLUSION

The industry is one of the leading sectors of regional development in Indonesia. Industrial development in each region must be carried out sustainably to provide direct benefits to the surrounding indigenous community. The involvement of indigenous people, whether weavers or not, is expected to strengthen the support for weaving. It should be noted that all the villages in Lombok develop their particular weaving. However, it is a very slow process on account of the development taking place in their respective area, few were able to survive, and they may become extinct at any given time due to the declining number of weavers. One that still survives is the village of South Pringgasela. Weavers as human resources have a talent derived from their ancestors, hence it can be said that not everyone can weave. This shows that the learning process occurs from generation to generation. Weavers, who are mostly of mature age, can share their knowledge with the younger generation. It is hoped that through the learning process the regeneration of weaving will be created, so that the threat of the declining number of weavers may be averted.

Implications for conservations

According to the Nations (2011), the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities contribute directly to global sustainable development so that the threat of biodiversity loss and climate change can be avoided, and can contribute significantly to conservation. Beginning in 1992 with the ‘Rio Earth Summit’, the United Nations has been promoting global recognition for indigenous knowledge systems in achieving various environmental goals. For this reason, building a relationship of mutual respect with indigenous peoples is considered necessary. We consider that this research will help enhance our understanding of indigenous people, who need to be maintained for achieving a sustainable future.

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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