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"Ruang Kopdar" at Tanjung Priok Station as RajutKejut Space of Joy in Circuit of Culture Studies

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ABSTRACT

Pekan Kebudayaan Nasional 2023 (PKN 2023) was held from 20 to 29 October 2023 in various areas in Jabodetabek. Researcher observed the Tanjung Priok Station and found that the RajutKejut community had created a lounge area known as "Ruang Kopdar." This research aims to uncover the meanings behind the work "Ruang Kopdar" created by the RajutKejut community. The research was conducted qualitatively through observations, interviews, and literature studies. The cultural phenomenon of RajutKejut will be analyzed using a cultural studies approach to uncover its meaning. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay introduced the Circuit of Culture, a model for analyzing and interpreting cultural phenomena. This model identifies five elements of cultural practice: representation, production, consumption, identity, and regulation. The research findings revealed that RajutKejut's installation "Ruang Kopdar" at Tanjung Priok Station transforms the building's cold, gloomy atmosphere into a warmer, more inviting space. This contrast highlights the hot climate and challenging lives of the area's residents. The installation fosters a dynamic interplay between creation and enjoyment, where production and consumption meet to create joy. Researcher perceive "Ruang Kopdar" as a space where expression and existence converge, providing a meaningful contribution that restores a sense of humanity and satisfies fundamental social needs.

Keywords: *Circuit of Culture, Craftivism, RajutKejut*

INTRODUCTION

In October 2023, residents of Jabodetabek had 40 living rooms, which can be freely accessed by the public. These rooms were made possible through the activities of the National Culture Week or Pekan Kebudayaan Nasional 2023 (PKN 2023), which was held from 20 to 29 October in various areas. The event featured many kinds of performances and events in different locations throughout the city, presented in living room arrangements, and facilitated by many art collectives and the wider community. Nawa Tunggal reported, through Kompas Daily, that the Directorate General of Culture at the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology has collaborated with over 660 art collectives and communities since the fourth edition of PKN began in June 2023. This initiative also welcomed citizen initiatives. The week-long celebration highlighted Indonesia's cultural diversity, which was reflected in the various activities held during the PKN (Tunggal, 2023). According to Wibawana, the theme for this year's PKN is "Caring for the Earth, Caring for Culture." The goal of the event is to provide meaning to the diverse cultural and artistic actions being carried out, all rooted in local wisdom and values. Hilmar Farid, the Director General of Culture at the Ministry of Education and Culture, stated that the theme of the week-long event aligns with his ministry's vision, emphasizing the importance of culture and the connection between nature and culture. He also noted that the principles of the department aim to encourage people to take care of the planet (Wibawana, 2023).

According to the Kemdikbudristek website, the activities of PKN 2023 were spread across various parts of the city, including Central Jakarta, South and East Jakarta, West and North Jakarta, as well as Tangerang, Bogor, and the Thousand Islands. Alit Ambara, the Artistic Director of PKN 2023, noted that the presence of several living rooms at the event would make the collective activities more accessible to the people of the city (Kemdikbudristek, 2023). The living room at Tanjung Priok Station showcases the work of artists from the RajutKejut collective, which had been invited to exhibit there a couple of months ago. Harjuni, one of the group's leaders, mentioned that 138 women from various cities of Java participated in creating the craftwork for the project. She also noted that the community's origins can be traced back to 2014 when the governor of Jakarta, Joko Widodo, placed benches along a pedestrian path in the city. This group of mothers initiated to decorate these benches with yarn craftwork overnight so that people would be surprised at the following day. This event led to the formation of the RajutKejut Community. It continues to grow and is regularly involved in various art activities, such as the Jakarta Biennale (Tunggal, 2023). This community makes the craftwork in the form of crocheting using the crochet technique, which is crocheting using one hook needle, called hakpen. According to a Peretas.org page, the number of members of the RajutKejut crocheting community has increased significantly across various cities in Indonesia. Most of its members are urban women from

Jakarta. The group was established by women from many kind of professions and backgrounds. RajutKejut aim to create a complete work of art, which can be displayed in public spaces, respond to nowadays social issues, and celebrate significant events in the country. Membership in this community is voluntary based and spontaneous (Peretas, 2020).

Researcher observed the Tanjung Priok Station and found that the RajutKejut Community had created a lounge area known as "Ruang Kopdar." In Bahasa Indonesia it means a space for meeting, refers to a gathering where crafters can meet to discuss their projects, since members of the community usually connect through WhatsApp and social media to discuss their projects. The "Ruang Kopdar" is open to the public. Upon entering the station's main entrance, passengers notice seating areas adorned with colorful crochet work. In addition to the crocheted seating, there are a pair of rocking chairs, a couple of bean bags, and numerous crocheted dream catchers hanging throughout the lounge. Despite the large gray steel structure of the station, the crochet decorations create a warm, vibrant, and comfortable atmosphere. Most of the works displayed are created by women from various cities in Java.

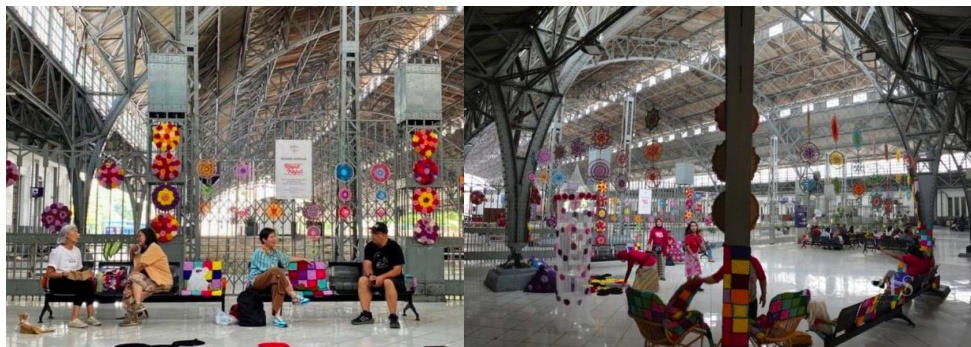


Figure 1. "Ruang Kopdar" created by RajutKejut community at Tanjung Priok Station
Source: RajutKejut (2023)



Figure 2. Fashion Show of Crocheters Wearing Their Crochet Works
Source: RajutKejut (2023)

Tanjung Priok Station, located in North Jakarta, was chosen for this lounge area because it has a colonial history and is a cultural heritage building over 100 years old. The building is supported by hundreds of piles and features a roof made

of thick concrete and zinc. The platform roof consists of a wide-span steel structure with a curved truss shape that shelters eight platforms simultaneously. The Tanjung Priok Station building showcases Art Deco style, characterized by detailed vertical and horizontal lines—an ornamentation popular in the early 20th century.

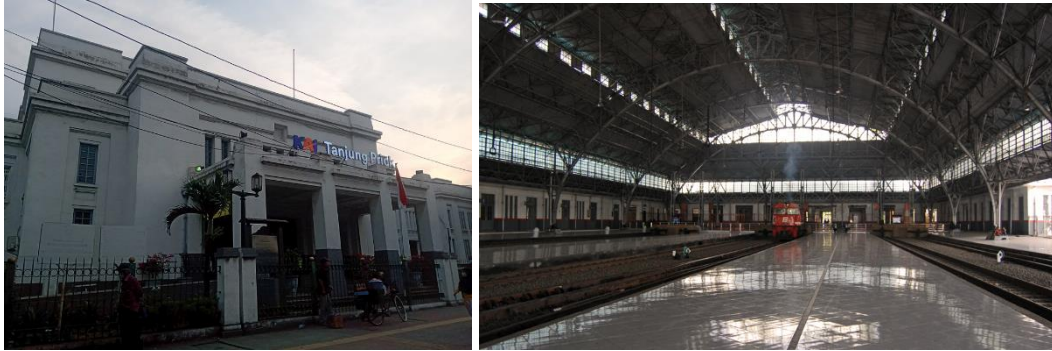


Figure 3. Tanjung Priok Station

Source: Wikipedia (2024)

Researcher have observed an intriguing transformation in the crocheted creations of the RajutKejut community. Originally crafted for personal and domestic purposes, these intricate pieces are now finding their place in public open spaces. This remarkable phenomenon, known as yarn bombing, epitomizes a vibrant form of street art where works made from thread are spontaneously installed in communal areas. The RajutKejut community embraces crochet as a powerful artistic medium, inviting the public to engage collectively in creative activities. This initiative transcends mere decoration; it embodies a spirit of activism, a movement highlights the potential for craft to drive social change for the better, known as craftivism. Coined by Betsy Greer in 2003, craftivism underscores the connection between handmade creation and democratic engagement, emphasizing that through our crafts, we recognize our inherent power (Greer, 2014).

RajutKejut has been active for ten years since 2014 and has evolved into a cultural phenomenon, showcasing both street art and craftivism executed by mothers who use yarn as their medium. This unique movement invites diverse interpretations of both the artwork and its creators. As a result, researcher believe it is essential to uncover the meanings behind the work "Ruang Kopdar" created by the RajutKejut community. Gaining insight into the significance of the RajutKejut community helps us better understand this cultural phenomenon, with the hope that it will contribute to social change and progress in the future.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted qualitatively through observations, interviews, and literature studies. The cultural phenomenon of RajutKejut will be analyzed using a cultural studies approach to uncover its meaning. As noted by Jamaican-born British sociologist Stuart Hall in his book with Paul du Gay, culture is shaped

by the role of meaning in society. Culture helps us understand various phenomena, making it essential to understand how this "meaning construction" occurs. People construct meaning through their representations of various subjects, and the primary means of representation in culture is language. However, language should not be understood narrowly as merely written or spoken words; it encompasses a broader system of representation. This system can include photography, painting, speech, writing, technology, and images, all of which use signs and symbols to represent or re-present anything that holds meaning—be it concepts, images, or ideas (du Gay et al., 2013). Meaning does not arise directly from an object itself; rather, it is shaped by how the object is presented, which is mediated through language—both verbally and visually (du Gay et al., 2013). In 1997, Hall and Paul du Gay introduced the Circuit of Culture, a model for analyzing and interpreting cultural phenomena. This model identifies five elements of cultural practice: representation, production, consumption, identity, and regulation. Through the interactions between these elements, meaning is derived.

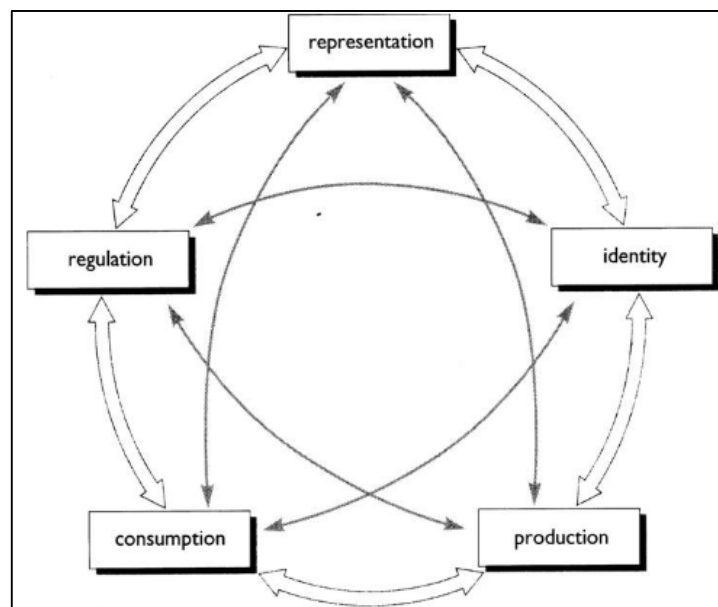


Figure 4. Circuit of Culture
Source: Hall (1997)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Circuit of Culture

In the book "Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices", Hall explains that the 'Circuit of Culture' suggests that meanings are produced at various sites and circulated through different processes or practices (the cultural circuit) (Hall & Open University, 1997). A cultural practice within the 'Circuit of Culture' involves the formation of meaning through representational practices. When the 'text' of a work is analyzed, certain representations emerge.

This 'text' plays a crucial role in constructing the meaning and image of a product, as well as influencing the groups and types of people associated with it. Through the study of identity, we can observe how products are 'coded' with specific meanings during the production process, aimed at establishing a connection between objects and particular consumer groups. Analyzing cultural products involves understanding not only how these objects are produced, both technically and culturally but also how they are made meaningful—'coded' with a particular significance—during this production process. By considering cultural production, we also reflect on the culture of production, which relates how production practices are associated with specific cultural meanings. This focus on the culture of production raises important questions about representation, identity, and consumption. The process of consuming cultural products involves ongoing meaning formation. While manufacturers aim to encode their products with specific meanings and associations based on their expectations, this is just the beginning of a product's life. The meaning ascribed to a product can vary significantly among users. Meaning is not simply transmitted by producers and passively received by consumers; instead, it becomes more active and dynamic as consumers engage with products in their daily lives. The presence of an object in cultural contexts is closely linked to the social regulations that exist within society. It is quite possible for a cultural phenomenon to emerge today under circumstances that differ from traditional contexts, or to experience conflicts between public and private spaces (du Gay et al., 2013).

The Cultural Practices of RajutKejut Analyzed through the Circuit of Culture: Production

RajutKejut produces post-modern works characterized by several distinctive tendencies. In the post-modern era, we observe the following: the blurring of boundaries between art and everyday life, the collapse of the distinction between high culture and pop culture, an eclectic mix of styles, as well as the use of parody, pastiche, irony, and playfulness. This period also celebrates "surface" culture, often overlooking the loss of originality and genius, and assumes that art can only repeat what has come before (Sugiharto, 2014). The works of RajutKejut reflect these post-modern characteristics. For example, there is a reversal of binary oppositions, similar to the principles of deconstruction art, where eclectic works incorporate materials and techniques from past creations within a contemporary context. Harjuni Rochayati explains that these works are placed in public spaces to help re-popularize crochet works, encouraging people to appreciate this art form once again (Kompas.com, 2017). The materials used in these works are uncommon in street art, specifically crochet creations made from fine threads that are installed on objects in public open spaces (Daniswari, 2019). Aesthetically, RajutKejut's work exemplifies characteristics of postmodern art, including pastiche, parody, kitsch, and camp. In terms of pastiche, the works romanticize the past by utilizing crochet,

a technique that has been known in Indonesia since the Dutch colonial era. However, unlike traditional crochet which typically uses cotton thread, this craft work employs polyester thread, making it more suitable for outdoor installations due to its resilience against weather changes. The aspect of parody is evident in the way crocheting, which is typically used to cover the human body, is now used to wrap objects in public spaces. Kitsch is present in the mass production spirit of the fine crochet works, characterized by high quantity, variable quality, and often only meeting minimum standards for crochet. Lastly, camp is illustrated by presenting crochet works, traditionally proportional to the human body, in large formats designed to capture the attention of the public in open spaces.

1. RajutKejut Crochet Works Produce a Relational Aesthetic

The RajutKejut crocheters combine various modular forms into crochet works to wrap steel poles and waiting room chairs, and also hang various dream catchers with bright colors that contrast with their surroundings, for residents who visit Tanjung Priok station to enjoy. Jessi Carina, via Kompas.com, reported that all volunteers who want to participate can submit the results of their crochet works and send them to the RajutKejut community. Next, the team from RajutKejut will put the crocheted pieces together (Carina, 2017). In the Titik Temu Gembira project report, it was stated that the participants (crocheters) were free to express themselves through their work, even modifying the form and feeling proud of the results of their modified work (Jakarta, 2019). According to Martin Suryajaya, works of art in the postmodern era are now anchored in social relationships that situate the work and validate the object as a work of art. It's no longer about the object. Aesthetic beauty becomes secondary, depending on the consensus that forms the aesthetic tastes of the artistic public. The most intrinsic evaluation criterion for a work is the extent to which the work can present the most intense experience of social relationships (Suryajaya, 2017).

2. Generate Networking via Social Media

RajutKejut used social media effectively, announcing an invitation to take part in this activity (Berbagi, 2019). Volunteers were mobilized through social media so that the scope of participants expanded, not only in Jakarta but across cities. A social movement network was formed when middle-class crocheters in Jabodetabek, with a postmodern culture, made extensive use of social media and digital technology to convey their invitations through their participatory work. Social media is also used to maintain the mood and encourage the enthusiasm of volunteers to work.

3. Share Knowledge

With a diverse profile of crocheters, both in background and abilities in the craft expertise, there is an exchange of knowledge between crocheters, both in the craft field and in other fields. Knowledge

exchange also occurs in the exhibition area when crocheters and visitors interact, as well as on social media when RajutKejut shares their creative processes.

4. Self-Existence

The collaborative approach fosters boldness, and projects such as yarn bombing can be executed successfully if done in groups. The outcome is greatly improved by working together. Through social media, crocheters who contribute to a project express appreciation for each other's efforts, which enhances their sense of self-worth. The acknowledgment of individuals in cyberspace appeals to crocheters, particularly for women in the digital era. Each crocheter is recognized through their work, which becomes an extension of their existence.

5. Joy

RajutKejut provides opportunities for the broader community to collaborate on projects and enjoy the process while raising awareness of various social issues. Positive feedback from visitors brings joy to the crocheters, boosts their enthusiasm for their work, and offers validation that their efforts are relevant, accepted, and beneficial.

The Cultural Practices of RajutKejut Analyzed through the Circuit of Culture: Consumption

1. Self-Existence

The crocheter is recognized as an individual through their work, which becomes an extension of their existence. According to Betsy Greer, the Do-It-Yourself and connected ethos allows us to reveal and appreciate the results of our efforts, enabling us to discover the best versions of ourselves (Greer, 2014). Through crafting, individuals can achieve a comprehensive understanding of their humanity as a universal representation of their unique existence (Masri & Pasaribu, 2018).

2. Experiencing

The Tanjung Priok Station is typically not visited by middle-class commuters due to how it is not connected to their daily routines. However, the presence of RajutKejut's artwork at Tanjung Priok Station attracts the public –middle-class as well– prompting visits to the station. Since people take photos of the work to share on social media, it encourages others to visit and enjoy it.

3. Participatory Arts Aesthetic

Participatory art involves the participants as the main elements, transforming them into the artistic medium. In this context, the artist assumes the role of a collaborator rather than a solitary figure (Bishop, 2012). Bishop highlights that prior to the institutionalization of participatory art and the emergence of relational aesthetics, there was no

suitable language to describe works of art in the social realm, which cannot simply be categorized as activism or community art (Bishop, 2012).

4. Contemplative and Reflective Practices

Mindful crocheting allows individuals to take a break from their daily routines. This aligns with the concept of a station as a stopping place before continuing one's journey. As Ati notes, "Crocheting trains focused thinking. Crocheting is also meditative. This is like dhzikir or praying firmly and repeatedly" (Tunggal, 2023). Crocheting can serve as a meditative activity that fosters contemplation. Contemplation is vital for gaining self-knowledge and understanding the world around us, including interactions within the RajutKejut community and with the crocheted objects and people in that environment. Maurice Merleau-Ponty asserted that self-knowledge is attained through action, which involves an individual's interaction with the world and other subjects. Human beings exist as bodily subjects in space and time, and they comprehend everything, including themselves, from specific perspectives. However, full self-understanding is not possible at a single moment. Hence, individuals need to engage in retrospective reflection to explore their past experiences and emotions (Tjaya, 2020).

5. Personal Satisfaction

Crocheters understand the risks associated with RajutKejut, including the potential loss or damage to their work from weather or vandalism. Yet, they find that the act of "giving" offers a deep sense of satisfaction and happiness that goes beyond any monetary or time investment.

6. Social Media

Crocheters often share photos and engage with one another on social media, helping to increase their visibility. RajutKejut uses social media as a tool for archiving their works, which is crucial since installations in public spaces may not last long.

7. Joy

Play is a method of exploration and learning, creating enjoyable experiences for people of all ages and backgrounds. The "Ruang Kopdar" project aims to spread joy among Jakarta's residents through its bright colors, enhancing the atmosphere in a cold and gloomy environment. Visitors can interact with the installation, experience the textures, and create lasting memories.

The Cultural Practices of RajutKejut Analyzed through the Circuit of Culture: Identity

RajutKejut encourages public involvement, inviting individuals who can make crochet and have an eye for aesthetics to participate, regardless of their

educational background in art or design. The PKN curator has positioned RajutKejut as a collective artist, creating a space for the crocheters to embrace their identities as artists. According to Hanafi, this collaborative approach –when artists engage with the community to address various issues– expands the interaction between art and the public, ensuring that art is not exclusive but accessible to everyone. In this context, the public is seen as creators.

The Cultural Practices of RajutKejut Analyzed through the Circuit of Culture: Representation

The “Ruang Kopdar” serves as a living room that reflects the atmosphere of a station lounge area. Metal chairs are adorned with colorful crocheting, while the bases of the steel poles in the station are similarly covered. Crocheted dream catchers hang stylishly, and a transparent drapery decorated with rosebuds adds charm. A pair of rocking chairs, cushioned with soft pillows, and bean bags filled with crochetwear, complete the cozy environment, accompanied by a table and rugs. This crocheted decor transforms Tanjung Priok Station from a mere stopover into a vibrant space. The living room created by RajutKejut acts as an expression space, where not only are the crocheted works displayed, but also activities such as learning to crochet, crocheting together, and demonstrations of finished crocheting projects take place. All these activities are open to the wider community. “The creation of crocheted works is not just an end goal. We believe that the crocheting process is a method of community development,” said Ati (Tunggal, 2023).

The Cultural Practices of RajutKejut Analyzed through the Circuit of Culture: Regulations

1. External

Street art is often viewed as vandalism. In the case of RajutKejut particularly, vandalism designation arises not because the art itself is damaging but merely installed without permission, often created as a “hit and run”. Furthermore, RajutKejut utilizes social media to disseminate the crochet work, as it is imperative to document their work since they may degrade over time in public environments.

2. Internal

Public open spaces are vulnerable to damage from weather conditions and can easily be harmed by the actions of irresponsible individuals. However, RajutKejut establishes work standards that require all creations in public spaces to be presented neatly. Additionally, both the production and consumption processes are intended to be enjoyable experiences.

CONCLUSION

The installation of RajutKejut's work "Ruang Kopdar" in the lounge area of Tanjung Priok Station enhances the environment of the building, which is spacious yet gloomy and cold, contrasting with the hot climate and challenging lives of the people in Tanjung Priok. This installation helps to transform the atmosphere into a warmer and friendlier space. A dialectic of production and consumption emerges, creating joy through the interplay between creating and enjoying the art, resulting in a dynamic relationship. Researcher perceive "Ruang Kopdar" as a space where expression and existence converge, providing a meaningful contribution that restores a sense of humanity and satisfies fundamental social needs.

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