

農村計画のパラダイム

—今、移住・定住・地域論の達成と展望は—

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目次

序文

神吉紀世子（農村計画委員長／京都大学）・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・ 1

第1部 講演者・コメンテーター発言要旨

学会賞受賞講演

高流動性社会を背景とした集落持続に向けた社会関係の再編に関する一連の研究

山崎義人（東洋大学）・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・ 9

主題解説

定住・交流・関係人口と農村計画

齋藤雪彦（千葉大学）・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・ 15

農山村における「自治」の再定義

田口太郎（徳島大学）・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・ 22

続・ヨソモノによるケのデザインを目指して

野田 満（東京都立大学）・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・ 24

地域コミュニティメディアとしてのコミュニティ FM の役割

本塚智貴（明石工業高等専門学校）・・・・・・・・・・・・ 26

コメンテーター・フロアコメンテーター発言要旨

喜界島の防風林に想う

山崎義人（東洋大学）・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・・ 28

コロナ禍における新たな域学連携コミュニケーション

前田 剛（長崎県対馬市しまの力創生課）・・・・・・・・ 29

顔が思い浮かべられる関係の重要性

西崎芽依（一般社団法人ならはみらい（福島県檜葉町））・・・・ 31

第2部 特集論考

福島原発事故から10年後の原子力被災地の復興の現状と課題	
川崎興太（福島大学）	35
コミュニティ衰退過程での災害弱者対策の困難性	
岩田俊二（NPO 法人弱者のための暮らし・まちづくり支援センター）， 山下 仁，瀬沼頼子，高橋武彦	39
Rural Live Now: “Subak Sustainability under New Adaptation”	
Catrini Pratihari Kubontubuh (The Indonesian Heritage Trust)	43
観光を用いた地域の生産力の発展に関する研究	
池ノ上真一（札幌国際大学）	47
条件不利地域における新たな生活の兆し ―クラウドサービスの活用に着目して	
友渕貴之（宮城大学）	51
里山の社会・文化を継承する農村計画への展開	
鈴木孝男（新潟食料農業大学）	53
北但大震災における復興建築の現状	
菊池義浩（兵庫県立大学），松井敬代	55
農村共生人口 ―異質なものの共生による地域の力	
山崎寿一（神戸大学）	57
The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Rural Living in Borobudur, Indonesia	
Titin Fatimah (Universitas Tarumanagara)	64

The impact of Covid-19 pandemic on rural living in Borobudur, Indonesia

Covid-19 パンデミックがインドネシアのボロブドゥールの農村生活に与える影響

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Abstract

Covid-19 pandemic outbreak hit many countries including Indonesia, resulting in many changes that occur. Rural areas considered as safe shelters characterized by better daily living conditions such as abundant open-air spaces, easy to maintain physical/social distancing, and easier access to nature. Borobudur area is characterized as rural area, but it has strong influenced by tourism activities due to the existence of Borobudur Temple as one of major tourist destinations in Indonesia. This paper aims to explore the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on rural living in Borobudur; how it affected the village community's life, and how they cope the crisis. In addition, how far then it can be considered to the future strategy of rural planning in the new adaptation. This study uses qualitative descriptive as the research method. Data collection method uses interview and literature study. Result of this study shows that Borobudur area is affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, mostly the ones who involved in tourism activities. There are 3 phases of tackling the Covid-19 pandemic: emergency response, recovery, and preparation of facing the new adaptation.

Introduction

Borobudur area is where the Borobudur Temple, one of world's biggest Buddhist temple, stands and exists. It is a huge valley surrounded by mountains and series of hills, in which there are many villages where residents live and carry out their daily activities with unique traditions, culture, gastronomy, landscapes, and communities. It is called Borobudur cultural landscape, an area which is rich of natural and cultural heritage. Borobudur Temple is surrounded by rural area, where mostly people living on agriculture and tourism supporting activities. Therefore, when Covid-19 pandemic hit Indonesia and pause the tourism activities, a big number of people are affected.

This paper aims to explore the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on rural living in Borobudur, how it affected the social-economic and cultural aspects of village community's life, and how they cope the crisis using their social strength.

Research Method

This study uses qualitative descriptive approach. Data collection was conducted using interviews and literature study. Due to the limitation of mobility during this pandemic, field observation is difficult to be carried out. Therefore, data was mainly obtained from a series of interview with local people and volunteers of disaster mitigation organizations, while supporting secondary data was obtained from literature study such as online news, social media coverage, website, journal publications, and so on.

Result and Analysis

1. Impacts on tourism sector

According to the data from the Central Statistics Agency, cumulatively (January-May 2020), the number of foreign tourist visits to Indonesia has decreased by 53.36 percent compared to the number of foreign tourist visits in the same period in 2019 (Helmi, 2020). This also happened to the visitor number of Borobudur Temple which decreases due to the pandemic situation.

Following government regulation for the closure of tourist destinations, Borobudur Temple had been closed since March 2020, and then reopened on 19 August 2020 but only receive limited number of visitor due to physical distancing requirement.



Picture 1. Borobudur Temple is closed for tourists due to Covid-19 pandemic
(Source: Borobudur Conservation Agency, 2020)

Not only Borobudur Temple Park, other tourism destinations were also temporarily closed for public. The destination owner/managers were waiting for a conducive situation while preparing the destination with cleaning, adding hand washing facilities and maintaining the physical distancing. It also happened in the villages around the Borobudur temple which are also tourist destinations.



Picture 2. Spraying disinfectant over the Borobudur Temple
(Source: Borobudur Conservation Agency, 2020)

During the pandemic, Borobudur Sub-District is the most affected compared to other sub-districts in Magelang Regency. This is because many residents of Borobudur sub-district make their livelihoods from tourism activities, while other sub-districts mostly from farming. When tourism activities paused, they lost their source of income and eventually become unemployed. Tourism actors are the ones who mostly affected in the area, such as tourist guide, souvenirs sellers, tour operator, owners of tourism supporting business such as restaurant, art gallery, etc. Many of them turned out to be anything or sell anything to earn money for living. Some tourist actors started to sell food and doing delivery services during the quarantine period, and so on. The picture below shows how a local artist (painter) who married a Japanese artist started to sell takoyaki in front of his art gallery, because there were no visitors during the pandemic.



Picture 3. A local artist/painter, owner of art gallery started to sell takoyaki since no visitor coming due to Covid-19 pandemic (Source: Umar Chusaeni, 2020)

Due to the Covid-19 crisis, several big annual events in Borobudur area were canceled, or some of them were redirected into online form. For instance, the celebration of Vesak Day, a Buddhist holiday, which is usually held on a large scale, this year was canceled. Some other events, latterly after the situation a little bit conducive, were carried out in a hybrid mode, combination of online and offline. For example, *Festival Lima Gunung* was conducted in very limited participants (only the artists and crews in person without crowds), then streamed via social media to reach their audience.

2. Impacts on surrounding rural area

Although urban areas have been hit hard by the crisis, the current Covid-19 pandemic is increasingly threatening rural areas, posing challenges that are exacerbated by low financial resources, not easy accessible healthcare, and a bigger problem of isolation (De Luca & Åberg, 2020). This Covid-19 pandemic has affected all aspects of rural society, both directly when people from rural communities fall ill, but also because of the social distancing restrictions (Phillipson, J et al., 2020).

Covid-19 crisis has had a significant impact on the lives of rural communities in the Borobudur area. For people who work as farmers, the impact may not as hard as tourism actors who mostly lost their jobs and become unemployed. This pandemic has affected in various sector such as economy, social and culture, but economic sector is the most affected.

Seeing these phenomena on economy sector, various activities were carried out to overcome this problem, so that hopefully not spread into a wider social problem. The program is called *padat karya tunai*, a form of activity involved many people and give cash money as the payment. This program was carried out, where people who lost their jobs were asked to help with various village activities with daily wages, including cleaning public facilities, guarding the Covid-19 alert post, and so on. Funds are taken from the Village Fund received from the Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Areas, and Transmigration. Many village programs have also been postponed, and their funds have been diverted for handling Covid-19 crisis program. In the early days of Covid-19 outbreak, the community took emergency response actions that involved all element of the communities.

Mostly every village in Borobudur Sub-district has an organization called LPRB, stands for '*Lembaga Pengurangan Resiko Bencana*' that means Disaster Risk Reduction Agency. This organization is programmed by the Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Areas, and Transmigration to be established in each village, and its operational is under the coordination of the National Disaster Management Authority. Since Borobudur area is considered as disaster-prone area, local government requires each village to establish the organization.

LPRB, together with village government then have a central role for handling the Covid-19 crisis in village level.

Despite all these difficulties, the village has several advantages from its environmental perspective. The condition of the rural environment is rich of nature and its density is not as dense as the city, allowing for easier way to maintain physical distancing, and allowing residents to live in free outdoor air. This is in line with De Luca & Åberg (2020) in their paper which mentioned that rural areas are also considered safe shelters characterized by better daily living conditions thanks to easy to maintain social distancing and access to nature, to cultural and nature-based recreation activities.

3. Tackling the Covid-19 crisis

Different countries have reacted differently to the Covid-19 outbreak, but a uniform global response is necessary for tackling the pandemic. Managing the present or future Covid-19 outbreaks is not impossible but surely difficult (Rahimi et al. 2020). In order to tackle the Covid-19 crisis in Borobudur area, there are several phases: emergency response, recovery, preparation of facing the new adaptation.

a) Emergency response

During this phase, village community do some emergency programs to prevent the spread of Covid-19 by less contact from outside and sterilize the environment. To control the contact from outsider, usually they built portal gate to control who is coming to the village. They built impermanent posko/post, usually placed in the village entrance. They provide water and soap for washing hands and disinfectant. Moreover, they also sterilize public places such as mosque, village office, by spraying disinfectant regularly. Village government established *Satgas* Covid-19 (*Satgas: Satuan Tugas*, means Task Force) consists of village officer, LPRB and village communities. This emergency response programs occurred around 2 months.



Picture 4. Spraying disinfectant at village entrance post and public facilities (Source: LPRB Giritengah Village, 2020)



Picture 5. Village-scale disaster mitigation training for LPRB members (Source: LPRB Giritengah Village, 2020)

b) Recovery

During pandemic, many people cannot earn enough money to live on. Therefore, many programs from the government are in the form of direct cash assistance to support the community in meeting their needs. For instance, Central government provide cash money assistance for 9 stages since May 2020, the government of Central Jawa Province provides '*Paket sembako*' (basic food packages) for 6 stages, Magelang Regency government gives cash money assistance, while in the village level, they utilize Village Fund provided by Ministry of Villages. Meanwhile, there are some other assistance provided by several ministries such as Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, Ministry of Manpower and Ministry of Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises.

c) Preparation of facing the new adaptation

Borobudur area is one of the 5 super priority destinations that have been set by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. In this regard, there is quite a lot of attention from the government in the context of handling and restoring impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. There are several programs that have been provided by the government in the Borobudur area, including the BISA Movement and the application of the CHSE protocol for tourist destinations. This is a strategy to prepare for the new normal era by implementing new adaptation patterns due to this pandemic.

BISA Movement

The BISA movement is an implementation of President Jokowi's directive for the social protection movement for tourism and creative economy actors and businesses, through labor-intensive movements and providing a stimulus for business actors in the tourism and creative economy sector. BISA is an abbreviation from Bersih, Indah, Sehat, Aman that means Clean, Beautiful, Healthy, Safe. The term 'bisa' which is in Indonesian language means 'able' gives positive vibration to encourage communities to be able to tackle this crisis. The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy / Tourism and Creative Economy Agency involved 20 tourism villages in Magelang Regency to participate in BISA movement as a form of support for tourism and creative economy actors affected by Covid-19 (Kemenparekraf, 2020).



Picture 6. The opening ceremony of BISA Movement (Source: Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2020)

CHSE protocol

In preparing for the new normality in the tourism and creative economy sector, it is important to maintain tourist destinations that apply the Cleanliness, Health, Safety and Environment (CHSE) protocol. Furthermore, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy introduced the implementation of CHSE-based health protocols will prepare a certification process for tourism and creative economy businesses that have implemented the Covid-19 prevention protocol (Sabri, 2020). After several months closed for public, at the end of September, at least 51 tourist destinations in Magelang Regency start to be opened with CHSE protocol.



Picture 7. Socialization of CHSE program
(Source: Borobudur Gayeng Bareng, 2020)

4. The future planning of rural living and rural tourism in the new adaptation

Beside the effects and challenges caused by Covid-19, we need to seek the potential opportunities for rural areas in the next stage. The experience of partial social restrictions or total lockdown in some countries/areas could have reverted people's priorities. Landscape enjoyment, local safe food production and delivery, possibility of social distancing, and spread accessible open public areas, that were not much valued before, have been increasingly acknowledged by people living in small apartments in densely populated urban areas (Venter et al., 2020). At the same time, several experts around the world are calling for a 'rural renaissance', where rural areas would assume a central role in developing sustainable and resilient communities (De Luca & Åberg, 2020).

Therefore, nowadays rural living is much more appreciated and valued. Local authorities and stakeholders could use this moment to focus on shaping a more sustainable future rethinking how to protect and conserve the natural and cultural capital of their rural territories. It is necessary to look back the conception of Borobudur as cultural landscape (Kanki, Adishakti, Fatimah, 2015). Hence, it is important to harmonize the balance relation amongst natural and cultural capital in the area.

Borobudur surrounding villages which are mostly now involved in tourism activities have to prepare the future planning after the Covid-19 crisis. The pandemic is now still happening, and people mobility is still limited. During pandemic season, people try to avoid crowds, so the next trend for tourism activities is open nature attractions and few visitors. Tourists tend to choose places with outdoor activities and nature tourism. For example,

natural tourist destinations, camping ground, trekking, are quite attractive places, especially for people who are tired of experiencing months of quarantine. Rural tourism activities would fit those above-mentioned criteria. Now, it is the perfect time to catch the opportunity through 'rural renaissance'.

Conclusion

Borobudur area is affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, especially the ones who involved in tourism activities. There are 3 phases of tackling the Covid-19 pandemic: emergency response, recovery, and preparation of facing the new adaptation. Nowadays rural living is much more appreciated and valued, therefore it is the perfect moment to focus on shaping a more sustainable future of rural planning in the new adaptation era.

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