

Sanggar Pendopo Agung Ronggo Hadinegoro: Conserving Local Arts and Promoting Local Culture

Warih Handayani¹, Trisakti², Eko Wahyuni Rahayu³, Rr. Maha Kayliana Mita⁴,
Jajuk Dwi Sasana Djati⁵, T. D. Martiana⁶

Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

e-mail: warihhandayani@unesa.ac.id¹, trisakti@unesa.ac.id², youremailaddress@unesa.ac.id³,
youremailaddress@ueg.edu.my⁴, twinmartiana@unesa.ac.id⁵, twinmartiana@unesa.ac.id⁶

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Abstract

Art is an outward manifestation of a culture. An art studio, or “*sanggar*,” plays a crucial role in archiving work, serving as a platform to showcase artists and their creations. Effective management of a *sanggar* can ensure the preservation of creative works and potentially stimulate economic growth. This qualitative study uses direct interviews and participant observation to collect data. The analysis was conducted using Miles and Huberman’s approach, and the results were explained descriptively. The study aims to understand how a *sanggar* functions as a centre for preserving traditional arts. The findings suggest that the existence of Pendopo Agung Ronggo Hadinegoro contributes to local art conservation efforts by providing resources to local artists, managing art performances, promoting local art to both foreign and domestic tourists, and participating in art competitions on a national and international scale. These activities not only promote local arts but also enhance the value of local culture, preserve cultural traditions, and potentially boost the local artists’ creative industry.

Keywords: art studio, culture conservation, *sanggar*, sustainable development goal

Introduction

The term “heritage” is comprehensive, encompassing a variety of resources such as ecological, cultural, historical, architectural, archaeological, and geological attributes of different societies. In essence, heritage encapsulates the diverse practices and lifestyles that have been ingrained in individuals from distinct historical periods and unique societies. Culture and heritage serve as indicators of a civilisation’s spiritual and intellectual wealth. During the 20th century, there was a

noticeable increase in the societal importance placed on cultural practices. Matarasso (2001) posited that the recognition of culture as a significant factor in facilitating human growth didn't emerge until the latter part of the 20th century. He further stated that culture is a manifestation of human values that aids in identity formation. Tylor (1871) provided a definition of culture that includes several aspects such as knowledge, law, belief, morals, customs, art, and other behavioural patterns and skills essential for individuals to effectively participate in societal structures. According to Tylor, culture can be understood as a manifestation of various elements, including knowledge, legislation, belief systems, moral values, social practices, and artistic expressions. Liew (2005) suggested that culture serves as a connecting mechanism that can bridge various historical epochs and temporal contexts, spanning the past, the present, and the future. Acquiring knowledge about a particular culture can enhance an individual's cultural awareness, fostering a sense of community cohesion.

The Sanggar Pendopo Agung Ronggo Hadinegoro, an art studio in the Blitar Regency, has been featured in the documentary film "Amazing Blitar" and has performed successfully in Los Angeles to promote cultural tourism in the region. This studio, supported by the government, utilises an educational management model that cultivates exceptional human resources with the potential to drive the community's creative industries. The studio has been successful in training artists in various disciplines, such as dance, draping, puppetry, and traditional singing (*karawitan* and *sinden*). The regional government of Blitar established the studio as part of their efforts to mobilise activities related to the conservation of local cultural heritage. Recognising the importance of the arts in enhancing cultural resilience, fostering national identity, promoting tourism potential, and contributing to state revenue, they decided to set up art studios, including Sanggar Pendopo Agung Ronggo Hadinegoro. This study aims to investigate whether art studios can effectively conserve traditional arts. Researchers identified the potential of art studios as a medium for preserving local art and promoting it overseas. The focus of this study is the efforts made by Sanggar Pendopo Agung Ronggo Hadinegoro to carry out local art conservation.

Research studies (Saearani, et al. 2014; Purnama, 2015) have found that art studios play a vital role in preserving arts and cultures. They provide a platform for developing artistic skills, offer public entertainment, and serve as a space for designing and discussing arts. Art studios function as cultural hubs, fostering creativity and upholding the high standards and traditional customs of the local community. They are places of creative production, revitalisation, teaching, learning, and cultural transformation. The variety of educational management patterns employed by different studios to preserve the performing arts is intriguing. While many studios are independently run by artists, some, like the Sanggar Pendopo, are administered and supported by the government. This support enables them to cultivate and produce excellent artistic resources and promote the creative performing arts business. Tyas (2019) conducted a study on artist empowerment and found that artists can be empowered through activities in the fields of arts and culture, as well as through training and promotion.

Art Studio for Culture Conservation

An art studio is a physical space used by a community or group of individuals to engage in various artistic activities such as dance, painting, crafts, acting, and other similar artistic pursuits. The existence of an art studio promotes the preservation and continuation of traditional arts. Initially, the studio served as a communal space for those with a shared interest in traditional artistic practices. This space provides a gathering place for artists to engage in their creative pursuits and discuss their respective artistic endeavours. Furthermore, the studio can function as a site for the development and implementation of strategies. Individuals, communities, or groups have the opportunity to use studio facilities for a diverse range of activities including painting, dancing, theatre, and music, as well as engaging with musical instruments and crafts. The activities conducted within art studios primarily revolve around the acquisition of knowledge and skills related to the fine arts. These include a wide range of processes, including learning, creative exploration, and the actual production of artistic works. Art studios provide a viable alternative approach to education.

Art studios, typically established independently by individual artists, often have a private status due to their nature as independent businesses. For the educational achievements of these individuals to be considered equivalent to formal schooling, they must undergo an equalisation evaluation procedure overseen by a government-designated institution or a regional government. The preservation and sustainability of local culture, as well as the prevention of its extinction, necessitate the crucial existence of art studios. However, in contemporary times, there appears to be a noticeable lack of appreciation for local culture, particularly among the younger generation. The younger generation exhibits a greater inclination towards embracing alternative cultures as opposed to adhering to their own traditional customs. According to Priatna (2017), the preservation of cultural assets necessitates the establishment of a comprehensive framework. One such approach involves actively involving society in the conservation system through various means. Ashar (2014) suggests that the preservation of local culture can be achieved through three methods: training, performing, and literacy. However, Yulianingsih (2020) and Suryana & Rusdiana (2015) offer a different interpretation of preservation, viewing it as an ongoing and purposeful activity that is closely intertwined with training, performances, and cultural literacy. This approach aims to achieve specific goals that reflect the enduring and ever-evolving nature of culture, characterised by its dynamism, flexibility, and adaptability. These objectives encompass the following; to achieve specific aims that are indicative of the presence of a certain cultural phenomenon.

Conserving Culture through Community Empowerment

The term “empowerment” stems from the English word “power,” which can also be interpreted as “ability.” Empowerment refers to the process of realising one’s full potential by encouraging and educating oneself about that potential, as well as making efforts to develop it (Rasyad, 2014). To achieve a dynamic balance between

the government and all governed segments, empowerment needs to be carried out in a continuous and comprehensive manner. Consequently, a community empowerment strategy should be implemented because it can identify the problems that occur in certain areas by involving community participation in the process of overcoming problems in the surrounding area. The aim of community empowerment is to enhance one's knowledge, attitudes, and abilities that correspond with their profession and each individual so they can work and strive independently to improve the quality of their life. Empowering people means to bolster those who are already vulnerable without compromising those who are already powerful (Rasyad, 2014). The long-term goal of empowerment is to raise the overall quality of life and reduce the unemployment rate as much as possible.

The journey towards an improved standard of living is driven not only by an individual's personal abilities but also by their potential for development within their chosen field. Empowerment initiatives primarily focus on the needs and potential of the community. A community is considered empowered due to the people who reside there, the groups they belong to, and the natural, social, and cultural circumstances of their environment (Anwas, 2013). When assessing the potential of a location, it's essential to consider the collective experiences of its inhabitants. This approach facilitates easier implementation of empowerment strategies and is more likely to garner community support. The development of regional potential, particularly in terms of community skills, can serve as a resource for wealth generation, job creation, and the cultivation of dynamic community attitudes and behaviours, including human resources. Community development can be achieved through a service sector approach (Anwas, 2013), making it the responsibility of both central and regional governments to support and generate investment opportunities in their respective regions. Building competitive human resources is crucial for the growth of the creative industry, which can be achieved through training, mentoring, or a variety of other potential sources.

Method

This study utilised qualitative research methods, suggesting the existence of a societal phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The qualitative approach is deemed suitable for exploring how ethnic groups contribute to the preservation of local arts and traditions through informal educational practices such as training, enculturation, socialisation, reconstruction, re-actualisation, and revitalisation (Santosa, 2015). The research focused on the Sanggar Pendopo Agung Ronggo Hadinegoro (ARH), situated in Blitar, East Java. The objective was to investigate how Sanggar Pendopo ARH introduces local art to the wider public while simultaneously ensuring its preservation as a form of cultural conservation. Data collection methods, including observation, interviews, and documentation, were adapted from methodologies previously employed in arts events research (Rohidi, 2011).

This study aimed to observe and document the operations of Sanggar Pendopo ARH in managing training and introducing performing arts works, and to examine the public interest towards the studio. The objective was to collect data

related to these activities. Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders associated with the management of Sanggar Pendopo ARH, the local community, affiliated artists, art aficionados, visitors, and local government representatives. The collected data was processed, presented, and analysed using a modified version of the method developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2019). This modification was necessary due to the nature of the data, which primarily consisted of responses from participants, environmental observations, and documented evidence. Given these characteristics, the adapted method was deemed appropriate for conducting qualitative research on arts events. This phenomenon arises due to the fact that the data collected typically originates from individuals who have participated in interviews.

Result and Discussion

Respondent Characteristics

The study utilised data from 18 respondents. These respondents, selected for interviews, were categorised as follows: studio or community representatives (comprising the studio head, the village head, and two village elders), artists (including two trainers, two art studio trainees, and two performers), art enthusiasts (consisting of three laymen, two art lovers, and two visitors), and a local government employee. The researchers chose these respondents based on their assumptions, believing they could provide the necessary data for the study. The selection process was conducted randomly.

Result

The study's findings highlight that Sanggar Pendopo Agung Ronggo Hadi Negoro (ARH) functions as a platform for the preservation of local culture, specifically the performing arts, including music and dance. It is commendable that the regional government has made efforts to establish the Sanggar ARH Pendopo with the aim of conserving and promoting the region's rich cultural heritage and creative traditions. The locale sustains itself through the implementation of regional regulations, the procurement of regional resources, and the promotion of regional artists at local events. Furthermore, the government sponsors assistance initiatives, which include the organisation of art festivals, participation in art contests, operation of foreign exchange programmes, and the establishment of studios for artist training. The provision of a pavilion as a dedicated space for conducting studio activities serves as tangible evidence of the government's support for the preservation of local culture and arts. Consequently, the establishment of Sanggar Pendopo ARH has proven to be effective in preserving indigenous culture and plays a pivotal role in promoting regional arts. In addition to this, it has the potential to indirectly stimulate the growth of the creative industry, which will ultimately benefit the welfare of regional artists and contribute to the economy.

Discussion

History of (*Sejarah*) Sanggar Pendopo Agung Ronggo Hadinoegoro (ARH) Blitar. Sanggar Pendopo Agung Ronggo Hadi Negoro (ARH), located north of Blitar City Square in the Blitar Regency, is recognised as a site of cultural significance. This art studio is positioned within the historic government centre circle. The term “*pendopo*,” as defined in the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), refers to a spacious, open building without any boundaries or partitions, typically situated at the front of a house (Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, 2016). This structure is utilised for community gatherings, conferences, and storage of equipment among other things. In the common understanding among the people of Indonesia, a pendopo is often associated with the house or residence of the Meier or Regent (Hidayatun, 1999). As per the written record of Pemerintah Kabupaten Blitar, the construction of Pendopo Agung Ronggo Hadi Negoro was commissioned in 1875 by KPH Warsoekoesomo, the Regent of Blitar, following the eruption of Mount Kelud. This eruption led to the relocation of Blitar’s city centre from the bank of the Pakunden River, which was the original location of the city centre during colonial times.

The Pendopo structure, known as multiple structures, has been the official residence of the Regent of Blitar since 1875. It is located in the primary building of the complex. This structure features a main room referred to as Pringgitan Njero. This room houses inscriptions describing accomplishments achieved by the local people of Blitar, and these inscriptions are etched onto the pillars of the structure. In addition to the main room, there is a workroom for the regent in the eastern part of the building, a storage room for heirlooms and local historical relics in the western part, and a back room in the south next to the main building. This back room was previously used by palace servants, duchy employees, and the regent’s guests. There is also a side building for unit two on the rear veranda facing south, located behind the main building. The third structure, located on the east and right sides of the property, is now home to aides who were originally the personal bodyguard for the Regent’s family. This building was previously a gathering spot for courtiers and guests of the Regent. In front of the main building, there are four Dwarapala areas, two shaped like Sywa and two shaped like lions. There is also one Balitar I inscription, which contains the decree of King Jayanegara awarding Blitar as a Perdikan land. In the front yard, there is a statue of Sudanco Supriyadi, a national hero from Blitar. During an eruption of Mount Kelud, the Regent and his family took refuge in the fourth building, known as the Bunder Building (Pemerintah Kabupaten Blitar, 2016).



Figure 1. Pendopo Agung Ronggo Hadinegoro – front view.
(Source: <https://news.detik.com/berita-jawa-timur/d-3862154/hore-pendopo-agung-ronggohadinegoro-blitar-dibuka-untuk-umum>)



Figure 2. Room for storing weapon relics and cultural relics.
(Source: <https://news.detik.com/berita-jawa-timur/d-3862154/hore-pendopo-agung-ronggohadinegoro-blitar-dibuka-untuk-umum>)



Figure 3. Inscription on the wall in the pavilion.
(Source: <https://beritajatim.com/ragam/keramatnya-pendopo-rhn-blitar-saksi-bisu-letusan-kelud/>)



(a)



(b)

Figure 4. Arca (sculpture) (a) and Prasasti (inscription) (b).
(Source: <https://news.detik.com/berita-jawa-timur/d-3862154/hore-pendopo-agung-rongohadinegoro-blitar-dibuka-untuk-umum>)

The Pendopo ARH serves multiple purposes. It is the residence of the regent and a study centre for local culture, open to all. The pavilion houses a facility for storing relics, such as weapons and remnants of objects from the past, accessible to both domestic and international tourists. The Pendopo ARH is also a gathering place for local artists, providing a space for discussion, practice, and exhibition of their

artistic works. Over time, this led to the pavilion evolving into an art studio, known as Sanggar Pendopo Agung Ronggo Hadinegoro. Eventually, the Sanggar Pendopo ARH was designated by the government as a protective area for conserving intangible heritage. The main goal of this conservation is to preserve the region's traditional culture and introduce it to people from other parts of the world. This is particularly important for local performing arts, such as traditional dances, music, and puppet shows (*wayang*). This perspective aligns with previous studies (Matarasso, 2001; Idris et al., 2016; Kapp, 2019; Choudhary, 2021), which suggest that art studios can play a crucial role in introducing, studying, and developing traditional intangible heritage.

Cultural Conservation by Sanggar Pendopo Agung Ronggo Hadinegoro Blitar

Through the government empowerment strategy. The preservation of cultural assets is a collective effort that necessitates the involvement of various components, including the government (Matarasso, 2001; Rasyad, 2014; Matusky, 2015; Choudhary, 2021). The Blitar Government has multiple visions and missions, one of which is to enhance the local tourism sector as a means to conserve culture whilst optimising the local economy (Soedarsono, 1999). In alignment with the local government's administration, associated organisations strive to formulate strategic plans that are congruent with the government's vision and mission (Pemerintah Kabupaten Blitar, 2021). One facet linked to this strategic objective is the promotion and development of local potential, particularly the cultural heritage of a region. This strategic plan will be implemented in the form of an empowerment strategy that will stimulate the dissemination of local arts and culture to the wider community. It will also facilitate the development of the potential of local artists. The provision of educational opportunities for artists, the promotion of cultural tourism, and the organisation of competitions and festivals are all examples of strategies for empowering local arts. The department's activities for instructing dancers, musicians, and performers are divided into three stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation.

The Blitar Government is responsible for planning, which is executed by establishing arts training programmes and general arts education. This planning aids in outlining a broad policy direction concerning the continuity of the programme in future years, which is the primary objective of the planning. The government reviews and approves the plans before they are implemented. Once approved, the plans move to the implementation stage. During this phase, the government provides support to the *sanggar* to enable it to conduct a range of activities aimed at educating artists and aspiring artists, as well as identifying exceptional talent for the purpose of art conservation. This implementation occurs in each of their respective regions of origin, which can be thought of as the birthplaces of local art. The government-backed activities include both general and specialised training. The aim of the general training is to guide artists in the right direction so they can later receive successful training in the environments that are most familiar to them in their native areas. Meanwhile, specialised training is conducted with the goal of identifying outstanding talent who can be trained as artists and then utilised to

promote local arts on a national and international scale.

The government lends its support to associated institutions (the Department of Tourism, Culture, Youth, and Sports as well as the Regional Government) as part of the process of implementing this training. These associated institutions provide instructors and trainers to artists and promote artistic activities as part of regional activities. The activities relevant to the evaluation are conducted in the *sanggar*. This evaluation is given to artists, with the main emphasis on the artists' overall level of artistic talent and their participation in activities that allow them to gain practical experience. The evaluation procedure is carried out frequently (once a month), and in addition to being conducted under the direct supervision of the administration of the regional area, it is conducted in line with the protocols that have been developed. The purpose of this evaluation activity is to observe the results of the execution of the training programme. These results will be used as a reference for planning future activities. This finding is consistent with the findings of previous research, which found that efforts to preserve cultural heritage involve the collaboration of many different groups, including the community and the government (Soedarsono, 1999).

Through Artist Training. Local governments implement empowerment techniques as part of their efforts to preserve cultural traditions, one of which is artist training. This training focuses on three strategic points: strengthening, protecting, and supporting artists. The intention behind such training is to enhance both the artists' knowledge and their capabilities (Amelia, 2013). In addition, the training aims to increase general art knowledge and reduce the likelihood of discrimination between different types of artists. The workshop provides artists with both theoretical and practical direction, emphasising the participants' active engagement in the activities. Participants in the program come from various parts of the region, with many being artists. Training material is provided in the form of conversations, tasks, and practice to enhance creative knowledge and skills. Tasks are assigned and practices are engaged in with the goal of contributing to the process of empowerment. The artist training program is also conducted in the form of regular training, which aims to introduce students to local art and serves as a means of promoting art to the general public. This training helps ensure the long-term sustainability of the artist training program.



Figure 5. Preparation for wayang performance (puppet show). (Source: Researchers' archive)



Figure 6. Training for young artist trainees. (Source: Researchers' archive)



Figure 7. Studio as a place of practice and training. (Source: Researchers' archive)

Through Cultural Promotion. Efforts to preserve cultural heritage may also involve activities designed to attract tourists interested in the culture. To facilitate this promotional activity, studios are equipped with the necessary resources to stage performances both domestically (within the region) and internationally. Furthermore, cultural introduction activities are conducted through cultural exchanges with universities in other countries, one of which is the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), located in the United States. This cultural exchange is facilitated by providing financial support to the artists from Sanggar Pendopo ARH, enabling them to carry out cultural exchange activities in other countries. These activities include serving as art trainers and holding art performances in front of students and the general public in the respective countries. The purpose of this event is to familiarise members of foreign communities with the art and culture of the host community. In addition to promotion in foreign countries, promotion is also carried out in the domestic region, other regions, and even other countries by participating in cultural festivals and joining art competitions.

In addition to promotion outside of the region, the regional government also promotes within the region by providing the studio with the opportunity to perform in virtually every significant activity carried out by the government. This is done with the intention of local people becoming familiar with the art that is being promoted by the studio and also developing an appreciation for regional art. This action aligns with the findings of other studies regarding how to promote traditional arts internationally (Ahmad, A. 2006; Ahmad, Y. 2006; Alivizatou, 2011; Matusky, 2015, Choudhary, 2021; Bai & Weng, 2023).

Through Organizing Art Events. As previously mentioned, activities promoting cultural tourism are a reflection of government efforts to assist in

preserving indigenous cultural traditions. Moreover, the regional government organises cultural events such as art competitions and regional festivals as a form of support. The local government aids the Sanggar Pendopo ARH in organising art competitions, including music and dance competitions, in which all local artists are allowed to participate, according to the sources and data obtained. The Sanggar Pendopo ARH provides the venue, administration, and judges for the competition. This finding aligns with previous studies (Ahmad, 2006; Kapp, 2019; Yulianingsih, 2020) which stated that cultural promotion is a method to conserve cultural heritage as it contributes to the growth of local tradition. Besides organising competitions, the studio also actively participates in conservation efforts by planning cultural festivals. One such cultural festival coordinated by the Sanggar Pendopo ARH is the Panji Festival. This festival provides an opportunity for studio artists and other regional artists to enhance their skills and promote the arts. Furthermore, the collaboration between the Sanggar Pendopo ARH and the local government in organising this event is evident in the selection of the festival's venue, specifically the Penataran Temple. This location was chosen because the Penataran Temple is a site of cultural significance. The choice of venue serves a dual purpose: it promotes local culture and introduces cultural heritage to foreign communities, both nationally and internationally.



Figure 8. Art performances in the pavilion of Sanggar Pendopo ARH (Source: Researchers' archive)

Conclusion

Based on the data analysis findings, it can be inferred that the Sanggar Pendopo Agung Ronggo Hadinegoro (ARH) has shown its commitment to preserving regional arts and local culture. The Sanggar Pendopo ARH serves as a form of assistance from the regional government in the preservation of regional arts and culture. This type of conservation initiative involves the government providing financial support and material aid in the form of scholarships. These are used to facilitate cultural exchanges, organise festivals, and participate in competitions. In addition to financial aid, the government supports district events through regional policies that promote local arts. Furthermore, government support for *sanggar* in the form of training initiatives and enhancements to artists' artistic skills drives the promotion of regional art and the dissemination of artistic knowledge. From the findings, it can be deduced that the Sanggar Pendopo ARH has become a catalyst in promoting local arts and an effective effort to preserve local culture. Moreover, the development of local arts indirectly promotes the creative industry, which can ultimately benefit regional artists and the regional economy. This study focuses on the Sanggar Pendopo Agung Ronggo Hadinegoro art studio in Blitar, chosen for its accessibility and prominence. However, there are limitations to this study, including the selection of research subjects and the brief duration of field observations, which lasted only ten days. These constraints may affect the final findings of the investigation. To address these limitations, it is suggested that further studies be conducted. Additional research could also explore the impact of the art studio's existence on the regional economy and the surrounding community. This study is significant for various stakeholders, including local governments developing regional policies, artists using art studios to enhance their skills, and researchers studying the conservation of cultural heritage.

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