

CULTURAL HERITAGE AND IMAGES OF THE CITY: TRANSFORMATION OF SAWAHLUNTO IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

In order to be acknowledged as a World Heritage Centre by UNESCO in 2016, the city government transformed Sawahlunto, which used to be an old mining city, into what the government claimed as a culturally touristic mining city. The city had basically been declared as a dead city; however, the government has strategically increased its economics through tourism. This article focuses on the meaning-making process in the construction of the city image(s) basing the process in the discussion of the politics of collective memory and cultural heritage. Data, mainly findings from observations, interviews and textual analysis, were collected from two tourism sites namely *Goedang Ransoem* Museum and *Lubang Tambang Mbah Soero*. The aim of the research is to interpret how the people in Sawahlunto make sense of the image construction of the city or even contest it as the government conveyed particular meaning in redefining the city's identity. Abidin Kusno's conceptualization of collective memory in architecture is mainly used to analyze the architectural elements of the two tourism sites. Furthermore, the analysis also refers to Hobsbawn and Thompson's notion of cultural heritage and Leif Edvinson's images of the city. Research findings reveal that the city government constructs a dominant meaning of what they convey as cultural heritage by utilizing local laws and the authority from other regions which have more experiences in transforming their city into a city of cultural heritage. On the other hand, the people in Sawahlunto have their own understanding of what their city means for them in relation to their own cultural heritage. All in all, the complexity of the meaning-making process in the city's transformation between the government and the people could be read as a battleground of contesting discourses.

Keywords: Sawahlunto, city transformation, memory, cultural heritage, images of the city

Introduction

Transformation of cities in South East Asian cities should be taken into account as a problematic space-making process in which multiple actors with imbalanced power relations affirm or even contest dominant discourses. In Indonesia, with the growing force of globalization and the changing nature of centre-periphery power relation due to regional autonomy has created complications in the way cities reconstruct their identities. The case study chosen for this article is on Sawahlunto, an ex-mining city located in the West Sumatra province, Indonesia. The city has

transformed from a mining city into a city relying heavily on its tourism and cultural heritage as its marketing tools. At the beginning of its transformation, there were a lot of pessimistic concerns because the city has been declared as a dead city (Asoka, 2005:162). The people in Sawahlunto doubted the government's policy in transforming the city into a touristic space. One of the biggest reasons was because the people believe that their areas of expertise had always been in mining and to work in the tourism business would require a drastic change in their life skills. Furthermore, the location of the city was not considered strategic enough to attract tourist, locals or foreigners. Despite all of these doubts, the city government carried on with their plan and transformed the city by creating touristic sites, such as the two museums that will be discussed in this article: *Goedang Ransoem* Museum and *Lubang Tambang Mbah Soero*.

This research focuses on how this transformation is the result of the government's authority in constructing a dominant image of the city by utilizing redefined fragments of the city's memory and cultural heritage. In this process, the imbalanced power relation between the government and the people in Sawahlunto create contesting ideals. On one side, the government used cultural strategies in order to extract the memories of the past. One way was to build touristic sites based on these memories emphasizing on the city's mining past. For example, in *Info Box* (a section of the *Goedang Ransoem* Museum), the government used a lot of modern elements to signify a modern and developed city while still referring to the city's mining past. However, rebuilding the *Info Box* structure was actually problematic because there were a number of resistance and different narrative stances from the society as the historicity of that particular element of Sawahlunto's cultural heritage is actually very dynamic and diverged.

For this research, data were collected from observations, interviews and textual analysis, which was done by analyzing the tourism sites as cultural texts and the "marketing" materials, such as the tabloids from the museums from a Cultural Studies perspective. The discussion is divided into three parts: the context of the city's transformation from a colonial city into a touristic space, modern architecture as the government's strategies in constructing the dominant image of Sawahlunto, and how the people of Sawahlunto make meaning out of this transformation in relation to the notion of cultural heritage.

Transforming a Colonial (Mining) City into a Touristic Space

Sawahlunto city was a colonial city which was then transformed into a city that runs from its touristic businesses while still using its mining identity from the past as its marketing tool. The city of Sawahlunto originated with the discovery of coal in the stem Ombilin by De Groot in 1858 and De Greve expedition in 1868 was done afterward continued with more explorations of coal. Eventually, the mining city was built in Sawahlunto in the 1890s. In order to fulfill the needs or the workforce, prisoners were brought in because the Minangkabau people were not used to working underground (Erman, 2005: 74). This was the start of how Sawahlunto was actually developing into the first multi-ethnic city in West Sumatra. The Ombilin mining site produced large income for the Netherlands. Therefore, during the Dutch colonial period, the dominant construction of Sawahlunto's identity was as a mine site, evident by the multiple mining locations.

The transformation of Sawahlunto into a tourism city was then marked by the establishment of museums. In its development, the transformation of the city was merely transforming particular

spaces in Sawahlunto, whereas the city actually has a complex history which is then reduced in museum spaces. Historical writings about the city of Sawahlunto provide an explanation of the long and complex history of the formation of the city from the colonial period. During the proclamation of Indonesian independence in 1945, the authority of the mining sites was taken over by the Indonesian government under the supervision of PT Bukit Asam. The Ombilin coal mining was no longer in business to insufficient investment to continue mining. Mining was dismissed in the late 1990s because of competitors from other countries. As a result, the population of Sawahlunto decreased in 1999 from 55,546 to 50,875 in 2000. One of the reasons for the decline in population is due to the Ombilin mining workers being transferred to the Tanjung Enim mine in Palembang. The decline in the number of residents becomes a serious concern as it would be very influential on the growth of the city.

The long-term consequences of the discontinuing of mining operations could be seen from the sharply declining economic growth as it reached minus two points fifty-seven in 2001 (BPS, 2015). This situation encourages urban development by prioritizing the city's identity as a coal-producing city. However, the condition of coal excavation field can not be done on a large scale because the natural resources are running low. The social context encourages the government to transform the city. It is outlined in the Regional Regulation of Sawahlunto City No. 2 of 2001 on its vision and mission. It is stated that the vision of sawahlunto city is: "Sawahlunto in 2020 will become a Cultural Tourism City with the basis of its mining past."

In the present time, the dominant meaning constructed by the government as a producer of the meaning of city image (encoding process) is as a tourism city, marked with tourism sites spread in Sawahlunto City. Sawahlunto has been interpreted differently in its transformation process into a tourist city with the presence of the museums. Sawahlunto utilizes the past memories to be re-presented into the present space in order to generate potential rising economy in Sawahlunto. Mining in the past is now re-presented in the institutional space of the museum in order for the city to be "a Cultural Tourism City with the basis of its mining past." In its development, tourism in Sawahlunto was developed by opening a new tourism center with the premise of art and culture villages, hosting Tour De Singkarak, hosting the International SIMFES music festival, and Silungkang songket restoration. The city of Sawahlunto organizes events every weekend and at least one festival every month.

With all of these changes, the context of Kota Sawahlunto as a mining town turned into a tourism city has opened the discussion of collective memory and cultural heritage. The city government excavates the past memory to articulate this new identity of Sawahlunto and eventually created mining tourism. Mining tourism is a tourism activity utilizing assets and mining activities as an object of tourist attractions. Currently, the city of Sawahlunto rose as a cultured mining touristic town and was nominated, in 2016, to receive UNESCO recognition as World Cultural Heritage City.

Modern Architecture as a Strategy to Construct Dominant Images of Sawahlunto's Cultural Heritage

The city's government main strategy in transforming the city is by constructing museum spaces as memorabilia in order to relive the mining past while at the same time emphasize on the modern elements of the city in the museum spaces. Research findings reveal that modern

architecture in the two museums used as a case study in this research is used to signify Sawahlunto's cultural heritage. The local government creates a dominant meaning through modern spaces, such as the use of science and technology in the Science and Technology Center on *Goedang Ransoem* Museum and the Info Box in *Lubang Tambang Mbah Soero*.

Goedang Ransoem Museum is one of the main and largest museums in Sawahlunto. It is located in the old town section of the city and it has been claimed by the city government in many touristic materials as the center of the city's tourism sites. The location of this tourism site is located in the downtown area and adjacent to *Lubang Tambang Mbah Soero* site. This museum is managed by Cultural Heritage and Heritage Department of Sawahlunto City Museum which was inaugurated in 2008. This museum was used as a public kitchen during the Dutch era. The building was built in 1918 as a place to cook food for for coal miners and hospital patients.

In this touristic space, the dominant meaning-making process of Sawahlunto's cultural heritage is focused on the use of modern technology or science. The local government creates the city image through the memorialization of mining while emphasizing on the modern technology. This argument was based on the researcher's reading of the audiovisual room, Science Center, and the exhibition highlighting high technology of cooking utensils in one of the displays in *Goedang Ransoem*. It relates to the redefinition of cultural heritage by the city's government.

The city's government uses the *Goedang Ransoem* Museum by combining memory and modern element. For example, *Goedang Ransoem* Museum has an audiovisual room that is located at the front of the museum. The audiovisual room shows a short video about *Goedang Ransoem* Museum and this film screening technology emphasizes the orientation of the museum nowadays. Moreover, *Goedang Ransoem* Museum has a Science and Technology Center. These modern elements are presented side by side with the traditional elements, such as the Ethnographic Gallery. The Ethnographic Gallery room contains exhibitions of various ethnic wedding ceremonies in Sawahlunto City.

Traditional and modern elements are constantly used throughout the museum. It is also described in the news in Sawahlunto Museum News:

“The ethnographic gallery displays the various wedding dresses in Sawahlunto while the Science and Technology Centre shows some collections of science and technology. The latest collection in the Science and Technology Center is equipment and technology related to light or optic.” (translated by the researcher from Sawahlunto Museum News XIV 2014 edition page 4)

Goedang Ransoem Museum presents modernity in the form of science and technology while also emphasizing on Sawahlunto's traditional heritage. The purpose of establishment of Science and Technology Center is described in the Sawahlunto Museum News (2010):

“By presenting props and programs, Science and Technology Center of Sawahlunto focuses on fun learning. Science and Technology Center is placed in the museum to develop young people creativity and foster the love of science and technology. It is important to educators to be able to teach science and technology with popular issues and engaging in society. It is also important for families and society to know science and technology especially in solving

local problems, as well as global. It can be a place for experts to be able to communicate their knowledge to the community through popular themes and languages. Then, it is also important for the research and development sector and universities in the socialization and promotion their products to the public.” (translated by the researcher from Sawahlunto Museum News edition 2010 page 8)

As mentioned in this excerpt, the Science and Technology Center established itself as a place for young people and as a fun place for discussions on actual issues in the community signifying progress and development (future oriented). The city’s government has established the Science and Technology Center to create good environment for learning science in a fun, easy and useful way (Mak Itam, 2nd Edition XII, July-September 2014: 13). The paradigm of the museum as a boring and “old” place is challenged by creating future oriented and pleasant space that is represented by the Science and Technology Center. The museum is expected to attract students and researchers: young and old. The city’s government creates the city image through this room as an open-minded city on novelty through scientific discoveries and this is a significant part in the meaning-making process of Sawahlunto’s transformation (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Science and Technology Center at Goedang Ransoem Museum
(photographs are the researcher’s personal documentation taken in January 2017)

The construction of meaning through this Science and Technology Center purpose is similar to what Edvinson (2006) argues on his research on “*Aspects on the City as a Knowledge Tool.*” He analyzes the formation of Kuala Lumpur as an educational city to shape the image of the city.

“One of the most impressive and interesting case of extreme make over of a city is coming from Malaysia there the transformation of not only the capital city Kuala Lumpur but a

number of cities and the whole country with the knowledge city as a change agent.... This vision focused on the extreme makeover of this developing country economy into a world-class attractive place regarding living, work and social services.” (8)

Kuala Lumpur is created as a city of scientific development. It will attract people to live, and work there and investors will like to develop their companies there. Kuala Lumpur chooses to negate the relation to backwardness by associating itself to science. It enhances the city’s image as a modern city. Sawahlunto city’s government wants to create the city image that is heavily based on science suggesting a modern and developed city.

Furthermore, through the establishment of the Science and Technology Center as an interactive learning media based on natural science, the museum as a representation of the city’s image is conveying the image of a modern, innovative, and open-minded city. This meaning-making process is based on the context of the prediction of Sawahlunto as the dead city. Sawahlunto was not able to rise its economic condition and one of the solutions was re-creating Sawahlunto into a modern city and themes that are considered to represent progress were chosen. One of these themes was science. It is the government’s strategy to describe the progress of the city through science. The museum is as a space in which the visitors make-meaning out of the exhibition through coding and visitors will come out with their own reflection and interpretation.

Another evidences from the research that show how modern signifiers are constantly used throughout the museum is through the exhibition of the high technological cooking system in Goedang Ransoem Museum. The dominant meaning presented in Goedang Ransoem Museum is about remembering the golden era of mining industry, urban development, high technology and limited facilities. The main focus visitors are exposed to as soon as we enter the museum is all about modern technology. The display of the cooking system exemplifies the memorialization of the government on the history of the formation of public kitchen, function, and how modern the system was in that particular time. The city image through this memorialization is a modern city since the Dutch era that could be seen from existing facilities. In the display, there is a furnace that uses steam as its fuel representing progress and sophisticated tools beyond its time. The function of the furnace is to produce steam for cooking process. It also shows variety of cooking utensils and large-scale burning stoves as historical evidences. This burning stove is quite modern equipment in the Dutch colonial era (Mak Itam, 2013: 5).

Through the memorialization, the city government wants to emphasize the progress of the city that has existed since ancient times through the representation of high cooking technology. The government shows the city's glory through the memorialization which is part of the image of the city (Figures 2 and 3).



Figure 2: Cooking equipment di Goedang Ransoem (Documentary source of researcher January 2017)



Figure 3: Furnace (Documentary source of researcher, January 2016)

Therefore, we argue that Museum Goedang Ransoem meaning-making process is all about the glory of Sawahlunto. It is explained in Sawahlunto Museum News (2010);

“This is what we expect from the collection that is in the museum. It is related to the function of the museum. The collection shows the culture and civilization that were developed at the time. In the Dutch era, Sawahlunto was very developed compared to other regions in Indonesia. It can be seen by the largest stove with super-sophisticated steam technology or known as *power stroom*, the largest cooking kitchen with super-large cooking utensils, and much more.” (translated by the researcher from Sawahlunto Museum News 2010 page 7)

Government memorialization focuses on the technology in Goedang Ransoem Museum. The collective memory on large-scale cooking activities that were used hundreds of years ago are displayed in order to reconstruct the image of the advanced technology used in the past. These large-scale kitchen utensils provide an image of progress of Sawahlunto. Furthermore, the government's memorialization on the walls of the museum focus on the meaning-making process about the developed mining city indicating the progress of the city. From the layout of the museum, it could be argued that the city's government memorialization has indeed become a significant part in shaping the image of Sawahlunto by utilizing the collective memory. The government's strategy in Goedang Ransoem Museum as the main tourist site could not be separated from the government's authorities as the actor who want to show the developed city through the progress of cooking technologies and facilities around the museum.

Meanwhile, *Lubang Tambang Mbah Soero* (literally means Mbah Soero's Pit Mine) is one of the pit mine tourism sites in Sawahlunto. This pit mine is the only pit that has been converted into a tourist attraction located in the old town section of the city near *Goedang Ransoem* Museum. *Lubang Tambang Mbah Soero* was the first deep pit in Indonesia which was established by the

Dutch in 1898 and it was closed in 1932 due to the high-water seepage (Sawahlunto Museum News 2014: 2). The site was named based on the name of one of the foremen in the mine, whose name was Soerono. This touristic space was opened in 2008 and the inauguration was done at the same time with the inauguration of the *Goedang Ransoem* Museum. Historically, in this stale and humid pit mine, there were a lot of violence violating the mine workers' human rights. Thousands of indigenous dissidents from various prisons in Indonesia which at that time was named "*orang rantai*" or chained workers were forced to work barefoot with chains on their hands and feet (I have discussed this issue in a forthcoming publication).

Besides the Goedang Ransoem Museum, the government also presents this dominant meaning of the city's image in *Lubang Tambang Mbah Soero* by reconstructing the Info Box. The Info Box is main source of information about the history of the Sawahlunto in this touristic site. The Info Box uses both traditional and modern elements. While making use of the past memory of Sawahlunto City, the government also tries to shape the image of the city through the modern elements. The Info Box space is as representation of the image of the developed city. It is also represented through a number of other modern attractions built near the site, such as water parks, zoo, and dreamland (still in process).



Figure 4. Modern Architecture in the Info Box
(Documentary source of researcher, January 2017)

From figure 4, I would argue that the Info Box is transformed into a modern architecture. The government uses modern architecture while maintaining depictions of the memory of cultured mining tourism. The city government incorporates modern elements in projecting the city's collective memory through the addition of spaces and the choice of goods in the exhibition that accentuate high technology. These are the city's government strategy in shaping the city's image as a modern, innovative and open city.

Research findings evaluate the notion of dominant meaning-making in the cultural heritage of Sawahlunto. It focuses on progress through memorialization with modern elements. The city's government emphasizes on the use of science and technology, cooking system technology in Goedang Ransoem Museum, the development of modern infrastructure in the past, and the

renovation in modern architecture. It shows the city's government strategy in selecting what kind of memorialisation they could use in order to create the city's image. The establishment of the image aims to increase tourists' visits and investment. In this case, the society, based on interviews, seems to agree with the dominant meaning-making of the city's image in order to increase the number of visitors since it can affect social economy. This will be further discussed in the following sub-section.

Contesting Government's Memorialization of the Past

In the previous sub-section, research findings have shown the dominant meaning-making of cultural heritage in the *Info Box* is by combining modern and traditional elements. Differing opinions from the people in Sawahlunto about the development of the *Info Box* have opened up diverging issues of cultural heritage. First and foremost, the *Info Box* is information center located beside *Lubang Tambang Mbah Soero*. The reconstruction of the *Info Box* is based on the determination of the status of the *Info Box* as unprotected cultural heritage objects. On the other hand, the people in Sawahlunto defines the building as part of the city's identity.

There are several differences on how the *Info Box* is being interpreted. Through the City's Government's memorialization on the *Info Box* wall and brochure, it is mentioned that the building was deliberately torn down and rebuilt because this building was not included in the list of protected cultural heritage objects. The memorialization of the government in the *Info Box* exhibition states:

“With the existence of research from Batusangkar Archaeological Heritage Conservation Center at the beginning of 2007 stated that are not included in the category of Protected Objects. So, local government rebuild it.”

This statement from the government shows that the *Info Box* was not considered as a cultural heritage building, so it could be rebuilt. Sawahlunto's Government requested assistance in other areas to conduct research on historical heritage objects in Sawahlunto. The research team of Archaeological Heritage Preservation from Batusangkar, another region in West Sumatra, was selected to conduct research on buildings or objects of cultural heritage in Sawahlunto. By borrowing authoritative voice from a “scientific” source, the Archaeological Heritage Preservation, the city's government imposed a particular meaning to the site as not a part of the city's cultural heritage buildings.

This transformation shows the urban government's desire to no longer attach the space to its past as the mine workers' entertainment spot. The city government reconstruct the image of the space as the main source of information of the city. It is as described by Hobsbawn (1983):

“However, we should expect it to occur more frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which ‘old’ traditions had been designed, producing new ones to which they were not applicable, or when such old traditions and their institutional carriers and promulgator no longer prove sufficiently adaptable and flexible, or are otherwise eliminated: in shorts, when there are sufficiently large and rapid change on the demand or supply side (5).”

Hobsbawn explains the practices of the old tradition as all things associated with certain cultural that could not be adapted and revived. It could be seen from the case of the *Info Box*. The local government feels that the mining workers' entertainment place could not be adapted into the present day dominant image of the city. It was not flexible enough to adjust to the the concept of Sawahlunto as a culturally touristic mining city. The fact that that particular space used to be a venue of worker's entertainment with potential morally unacceptable features (drinking, prostitution and many others) were considered to be unrepresentative. The city's government choose to not put forward that particular memory of the place.

The debate about the *Info Box* reconstruction raises further questions about the definition of cultural heritage. The local Government uses the basis of legislation in assessing buildings as historical heritage. The *Info Box* has been rebuilt since 2007. The basis of the the process of demolition of the buildings in that area was the Local Regulation of Sawahlunto No. 6 of 2007 about management of cultural heritage objects and the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 11 of 2010 regarding the age of buildings that must be 50 years old to be cultural heritage. This shows how laws and regulations are utilized by the government to maintain its powerful status in deciding how to define the city's cultural heritage.

In my interviews with the local people in Sawahlunto, they actually disapprove how cultural heritage is being defined by the city's government. Sukadi (a descendant of a chain of people from Java, who established and managed the *Dulur Tunggal Sakapal* community) explained how the place became a part of the daily life of the society in Sawahlunto:

“That's too bad, the *Info Box* used to be our entertainment building. That was the original bar and public entertainment venue. It was our community's meeting place. It was the place where workers get together during the Dutch era up to 1965 and it was replaced there were many people who were involved in G30S. GPB replaced GPK and GPK replaced the *Info Box*. There were puppets, music and dancing.” (translated by the researcher from Interview with Sukadi, 1-2-2017)

He explains how the society did not only consider the space as an entertainment venue but as a place of gathering. Other opinions I gather from interviews share similar sentiments. Mujiono, who also wrote the history of *orang rantai* and made a theater performance from his writings, explained how the building is part of history. By referring to the history of *orang rantai*, people feel that this part of the history is and will always be a part of their daily lives or a part of their culture. This is in contradiction with the government's memorialization of the building.

Based on the memorialization of the city's government, there are several historical writings that were developed about the entertainment venues in Sawahlunto. In these writings, it is claimed that were a number of entertainment venues, such as *the Societeit* and the comedy house. *The Societeit* building was built in 1910 to play pool and bowling. *The Societeit* has become Sawahlunto's Cultural Center in present time (Sawahlunto Museum News, 2010: 5). In addition, the Dutch government held a comedy show at the comedy house that was built in 1817. Nowadays, the comedy house has been transformed into a pawnshop (Sawahlunto Museum News, 2014: 5).

In the *Info Box*'s displays, the description of the building stated that the building was built in 1947. It was also reported in the museum's media, *Mak Itam* (Edition XIV 2014: 7). A written

explanation and memorialization of the city government on *Info Box* was found to be quite limited. The availability of such information indicates the existence of government authorities in filtering and spreading the news. Meanwhile, the historical writings explain that *the Societeit* was actually the main place of entertainment. Erman (2005: 50) identifies *the Societeit* as an entertainment space used since the Dutch era for drinking, singing and dancing. There is ambiguity from these multiple sources that do not overly explore how *the Info Box* building was actually a former entertainment venue.

The *Info Box* as an information center is a discourse of environmental politics that raised the meaning of mine culture tourism. This was confirmed by Gino (Historical Heritage Section of Sawahlunto Museum): "So actually with the vision of the cultured mine tourism mission, "cultured" is the key word Cultured Mine Tour. What do we mean by cultured? "Cultured" is our cultural character, right?" (translated by the researcher from an interview with Gino, 12-12-2016). There is a normative value in defining what is cultured and what is not cultured in the dominant meaning-making process by the city's government.

The norm refers to the cultural characteristics of Minangkabau society. "Cultured" in Minangkabau is based on *adat basandi sarak, sarak basandi kitabullah* (the philosophy of the people in Minangkabau) and the customs are based on Islamic values. In other words, "cultured" here refers to the morally cultured. Therefore, the historical association of the entertainment venue as a night club with all of its morally unacceptable behaviors could not be categorized as "cultured." The production of the government's meaning through the *Info Box* is to promote the value of a morally-based culture. In this research, this is one strategy in establishing a positive city image and negating the meaning of night entertainment, which was actually a part of the city's collective memory.

Therefore, the *Info Box* represents the strategy of the city's government in utilizing the collective memory of the city to create new images. Abidin Kusno (2005) describes the politics of collective memory: "The diversity of the past memory is united (and also forgotten) through modernist space architecture" (13-14). I argue that from the case of demolition of the entertainment venue which was rebuilt as the *Info Box*, space is expected to unify the imagination of visitors and the burden to remember has been transferred to the new space of the *Info Box*. The City's Government formed a new discourse on the memory of the space as an entertainment venue. *The Info Box* was rebuilt as a city information center stripping it off its morally unacceptable past as a night club.

The use of architectural strategies has also been studied by Raphael Samuel (1994). He claims that:

... retrochic in the 1970s and 1980s was one of those fields where enterprise culture came into its own, ministering not only the tourism trade but also to the alternative consumerism of the counter-culture: to teenage 'outlaw' fashion (notably punk); and to the new narcissism of health, optimized by *Body Shop*. (31)

Sawahlunto was transformed due to the prediction that Sawahlunto was turning into a dead city. Cultural heritage is used to generate the economy because the mines have been closed. It could be seen in the pros and cons of the *Info Box*. The City's Government reinterpretes the past by not

emphasizing on the past life of the entertainment venue.

This study shows the difference of opinion towards the definition of “cultured” by the people in Sawahlunto, the historical writings and the government. The difference is caused by the difference of understanding in defining the *Info Box* as a cultural heritage. The people have their own meaning-making process by associating *the Info Box* with its past narratives in understanding a cultural heritage. On the other hand, the City’s Government justifies its decision in transforming the space into an information centre by referring to laws and regulations. In this imbalanced power relation, daily narratives and the people’s knowledge is defeated by the formality of the laws and regulations. Based on the results of this study, the public has a distinct understanding of cultural heritage that is completely different from what is offered by the officials in this case the city’s government.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the City’s Government has established a dominant image of the city by conveying a dominant interpretation of cultural heritage while the people of Sawahlunto have their own meaning-making process which is actually contesting the dominant interpretation by the City’s Government. The City’s Government has strategically used the law and regulations, other regional cultural authorities such as the Archaeological Heritage Conservation Center in BatuSangkar, and the use of modern architecture. This study has opened up a discussion on the issue of cultural heritage based on the findings from the two sites: *Goedang Ransoem* Museum and *Lubang Tambang Mbah Soero*. There is a dominant interpretation by the government in utilizing collective memory and cultural heritage based on the interests of the authority in constructing the two touristic sites.

The government also focuses on technological advances in the two sites, there are formations. In the case of Sawahlunto, the image of the city of Sawahlunto formed by the City’s Government articulates progress, prosperity, technological progress and normative understanding of cultural heritage. The government sets boundaries and everything that goes beyond these boundaries are suppressed by the authorities eventhought research findings reveal that the people have not fully approved the dominant images constructed by the government. There are other meanings articulated by the people in Sawahlunto that are different from the dominant meaning from the government. The rejection of society is demonstrated through different meanings of cultural heritage based on their association with their daily life that is justified from their oral history.

All in all, the public expressed a discrepancy in understanding cultural heritage by using oral history to counter the government's memorialization. In this case study, the memorialization of the government seems to be the dominant collective memory because it sums up everyone's memory. The government emphasized the collective memory to the community by enforcing it as a shared memory. However, the people’s rejection of the dominant meaning reflects that there would never be an absolute dominant meaning since there will always be contestations.

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