

COUNTER-HEGEMONY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF *BAWOMATALUO* TOURIST DESTINATION, NIAS SELATAN, SUMATERA UTARA

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ABSTRACT

Bawomataluo which is located in South Nias, North Sumatra, has unique cultural and natural tourism. The area is referred to as “Bukit Matahari” (Hill of the Sun) as it is the area where tourists can enjoy the sunrise and sunset. However, the hegemonic practice performed by the government through its policies and the counter-hegemonic practice performed by the local people as the owner of the tourist destination have caused the area to be less developed. The problem of the study is how the counter-hegemonic practice is performed to develop the *Bawomataluo* tourist destination. This study is intended to understand and describe the form of the counter-hegemonic practice so it can widen the concepts of the related studies. The study used the qualitative method with the perspective of cultural studies. The theory of hegemony, the theory of power/knowledge, and the theory of social practice were used to analyze the data.

The result of the study showed that the counter-hegemonic practice performed by the *Bawomataluo* people included the counter-hegemony towards the government’s policy, the counter-hegemony towards change and functional change of cultural heritage, and the counter-hegemony towards the tourism-related activities. They are all the accumulation of the local people’s disappointment with the government’s policy (hegemonic practice) which has been performed so far. As a result, the development of the tourist destination and infrastructure has not achieved the target yet. This present study offers a strategic political policy so the development of the tourist destination in *Bawomataluo* in particular and in Indonesia in general can be avoided from the hegemonic practice and counter-hegemonic practice. To this end, the tourist destination should be sustainably developed in order to improve the local people’s economy and increase the government’s income. The development should be the community-based one as well.

Keywords: counter-hegemony, development, tourist destination, *Bawomataluo*.

INTRODUCTION

In *Bawomataluo* tourist destination in South Nias Regency, North Sumatra Province there are cultural tourist attractions and natural tourist attractions. The cultural tourist attractions include: traditional houses, the stone jumping attraction (*hombo batu*), megalithic site, traditional dances, and handicraft (souvenir). The natural tourist attractions include agricultural land, plantations, water fall (*namo sifelendrua*), the Indian Ocean view, the beautiful waves of the *Lagundry* beach, and *Sorake* beach, and traditional villages. This area

is also referred to as “bukit matahari” (the hill of the sun). The reason is that it is the area where one can enjoy the sunrise and the sunset. Geographically, the *Bawomataluo* area is 400 meters above the sea level or 1,313 feet from the sea level. Therefore, one should climb 84 steps made of carved stone with a 45 degree slope when entering the area.

The existence and uniqueness of the *Bawomataluo* tourist destination makes it used as the current symbol of the local government and the current icon of the tourism in South Nias Regency. Its picture has been printed on the 100 note of the Indonesian currency since 1992. According to Harefa (2009), the currency shows the uniqueness of the traditional houses, the war dance and the stone jumping tradition. In 2009 the area was proposed to be one of the world’s cultural heritages inspired by the UNESCO; however, it failed to be one of the world’s cultural heritages. The tourists from Asia, Europe, America, Germany, and several other countries have visited the area by cruiser. Each cruiser carries between 1,000 and 2,000 passengers. The domestic tourists coming to visit it total between 200 and 500 every week (Interview, Ariston Manao, 15 July 2016). However, the number of tourists coming to visit it has decreased now. As explained by Zebua (2014: 284), in 2012 the tourists coming to visit South Nias Regency totaled 1,250 and the domestic coming to visit it totaled 14,475.

It turns out that the uniqueness of the *Bawomataluo* tourist destination has been paid less attention to by the local government, local people, and entrepreneurs. There has been a conflict of interests in the development of the area. The policy made by the government seems to be a hegemonic practice performed by the government, and the local people, as the owner, seem to show counter-hegemony towards it. Based on the background above, the problem of the study can be formulated in the form of the question “how the counter-hegemonic practice has been performed in the current development of the *Bawomataluo* tourist destination?”

RESEARCH METHOD

According to Gramsci (2013:284), a social group of people can and should “lead” (hegemonic) before they hold the power. Furthermore, Foucault (2002:291) stated that an event is not a decision, fact, power and a battle but a mutual relation between an attack and the struggle for power. Everybody who has power will certainly determine or regulate the policies over others (Waruwu and Gaurifa, 2014: 85). The spread of power through a symbol (capital) is closely related to the economic and political power; therefore, it functions as a strong legitimating instrument for every party that uses it (Bourdieu, 2015: x).

Tourism is really an economic business regarding the natural sources and/or cultural resources by involving the government, the tourism industry, and the local people” (MUDANA, I Gede; SUTAMA, I Ketut; WIDHARI, Cokorda Istri Sri. ENTREPRENEURAL FIGURE OF MOUNT AGUNG TREKKING GUIDES. **E-Journal of Cultural Studies**, [S.I.], p. 1-7, aug. 2017. ISSN 2338-2449. Available at: <<https://ojs.unud.ac.id/index.php/ecs/article/view/33150>>. Date accessed: 02 jan. 2018.); and see also: MUDANA, I Gede; SUTAMA, I Ketut; WIDHARI, Cokorda Istri Sri. Kepeloporan kewirausahaan memandu pendakian daya tarik wisata Gunung Agung, Karangasem, Bali. **Journal of Bali Studies**, [S.I.], v. 7, n. 2, p. 19-38, oct. 2017. ISSN 2580-0698. Available at: <<https://ojs.unud.ac.id/index.php/kajianbali/article/view/35152>>. Date accessed: 02 jan. 2018.).

The data were collected through direct observation at *Bawomataluo* by interviewing head of the village, traditional leaders, the government official, tourists, and several local people. In addition, the researcher also collected the documents directly related to the topic of the study. After all the data were collected, they were analyzed using the qualitative method with the approach of cultural studies.

DISCUSSION

The policy of the development of the *Bawomataluo* tourist destination is prescribed in the Government Regulation Number 50 of 2011. With respect to the funding, a tourist destination is granted to the local government for the public interest (www.kemenpar.go.id). However, in the Act Number 10 of 2009, Article 49 clause (2), it is stated that the financial assistance allocated from the state budget and revenues and regional budget and revenues is classified as grant. It turns out that the development of the *Bawomataluo* tourist area has not maximally achieved the target yet. Therefore, the local people have offered resistance (counter-hegemony) to the government’s policy.

The local people are not so interested in maintaining and conserving the tourist attraction at *Bawomataluo*, although the government has planned it to be a national and international tourist destination. The counter-hegemony performed by the local people is in line with what is stated by Gramsci (2013: 284) that a social group of people can and should ‘lead’ (hegemonic) before they hold the government’s power. Barker (2005: 81-82) adds that hegemony should be continuously repeatedly created and regained, meaning that counter-hegemony cannot be avoided. The less harmonious relation between the government and

local people causes the entrepreneurs not to be brave enough to invest their money in this area.

The counter-hegemony is getting clearer when the local people do not show fidelity to the Village Regulation 'Peraturan Desa' (Perdes) Number 3 of 2015 concerning the prohibition of drying clothes, riding motorcycle and the appeal to refer to the regulation regulating the traditional house construction and so forth. Several villagers have broken the Village Regulation for which they are punished that they should pay Rp. 200,000 or two pigs as prescribed in the Village Regulation Number 3 of 2015, Chapter III Article 11 (the village head's document, 2015). Basically, such a deviation is a form of the local people's braveness to offer resistance to the government's policy. According to Foucault (2002: 386), human beings certainly have power and knowledge wherever they live. Therefore, Parchiano (2015: 181) stated that we should recognize that power and knowledge directly affect each other. The counter-hegemony movement keeps taking place as long as there is no consensus among individuals who disagree with the government policy (Horton and Hunt, 1999). Counter-hegemony results from the force of those who agree with change and that of those who disagree with change (Basrowi and Sukidin, 2003: 1). On the one hand, the government expects that the *Bawomataluo* becomes a tourist destination; on the other hand, the local people expects for a better life or instant income from the tourist destination in their village.

The hegemonic practice performed by the government is situated in its policy; however, the counter-hegemonic practice is situated in the right of ownership of the tourist attraction, social capital and cultural capital. According to Mahar et al. (2009: 16), domain can be understood as the domain of strength and the struggle for position and legitimate capital, and capital plays a role as a social relation in a system of exchange. The *Bawomataluo* area is the domain which the government and local people fight for using the capital they respectively have.

The *Bawomataluo* area has several unique and cultural heritages which are scarcely found in the world. They are the traditional houses and megalithic sites. In the middle of hundreds of traditional houses arranged in a row there is a big traditional house (*omo hada sebua*), namely the house inherited from King Laowo. The big traditional house started being constructed in 1863 and was completed in 1878. There are 7 statues of soldiers in front of trellis (Hammerle, 2013: 37). It is 28 meters high and has 107 big wooden pillars. No iron nails are used, making it the highest traditional house in the islands of Nias or in the world

(Interview, Ariston Manao, 10 June 2016). It took 15 years to build it. It was built 154 years ago.

Initially, the roofs of the traditional houses in this area were made of sago leaves (traditional); however, now the roofs are made of zinc. Ironically, many traditional houses have been damaged and replaced with the concrete houses as it will cost a lot to renovate them. In addition, the megalithic sites have been used as the places for drying clothes and other household furniture. The function of the cultural heritage has been changed; the shape of the traditional house has been modified, and many have been damaged at *Bawomataluo*. These illustrate the counter-hegemony performed by the local people to the government's policy (hegemonic practice).

Although it has been prescribed in the Government Regulation Number 50 of 2011 and the Village Regulation Number 3 of 2015 that nobody is allowed to change the cultural heritage and that it should be conserved, the local people at *Bawomataluo* have the ability to resist the policy. They prefer modifying their houses in order to feel comfortable to expecting for the financial assistance from the government for renovating their houses. The form of the traditional houses has been changed and the function of the cultural heritage has been changed, causing tourists to feel less comfortable when visiting the area. According to Pitana and Gayatri (2005: 81), the intention to know or learn an area with its local culture has motivated tourists to visit it. Most people living at *Bawomataluo* do not appreciate their cultural wealth as it does not economically and socially benefit them. The counter-hegemony practice results from the accumulation of their disappointment with and suspicion of the local government which only makes use of the potentials which the area where they live has.

The unique culture and beautiful nature at *Bawomataluo* have attracted the tourists who have come to visit it so far. One of the unique things which has become a phenomenon is the stone jumping attraction . Although it has been popular and used as the icon of the tourism in South Nias Regency, the athletes are getting less interested in it. They are not satisfied with the medical expenses and health assurance they have to pay when they have an accident while performing such a cultural attraction. In addition, they complain about the relatively small honorarium they receive every time they perform it. Apart from that, the distribution of the honorarium is coordinated by the government. The less attention paid to by the government has caused them to be too lazy to perform it and the other tourist attractions.

The local people's laziness shows one form of their counter-hegemony to the government which has made the area a tourist destination. Basically, tourism in an area can

contribute to the regional development, the development of arts, culture, and customs and traditions. Tourism can also be used as a strategy to tighten friendship among people with different ethnicities, religions, races and classes all over Indonesia (Widyastuti et al., 2017: 4). In spite of that, the local people still offer resistance as they are suspicious that the government only makes use of the potential they have for individual or collective interests. According to Jenks (2013: 106), the ideologies used to achieve a consensus are significantly the same as the role played in maintaining an order without being forced by guaranteeing that there is approval from those who are exploited, marginalized, poor and whose capital culture are robbed. Therefore, the local people cannot demand for more honorariums or more attention for the sake of the development of the *Bawomatalou* tourist destination. The hegemony practice performed by the government has caused the local people to disagree (counter-hegemony) with the tourism-related activities in the area where they live.

According to Gramsci (2013: 284), the civil society should prevent itself from the attacks made by the state. The local people living in *Bawomataluo* have a bargaining position against the government as the form of the power and knowledge they have. According to Foucault, power spreads all over the local spaces; where what dominates and resistance can be made to meet (Parchino, 2015: 18). According to Marx, power is an object (as capital) held by those who have failed as power is also a process which involves agency, discourse, and practice which flow from the upper class to the lower class (Agger, 2009: 282). Therefore, Gramsci emphasizes that it is necessary to show counter-hegemony through counter-hegemony (Jenks, 2013: 117). Therefore, the counter-hegemonic practice hampers the increase in the number of tourists coming to visit the *Bwomataluo* tourist destination and its development. The counter-hegemonic practice can also cause the tourists visiting the area not to feel so comfortable.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

The conflict of interests between the government, entrepreneurs, and local people has contributed to the less attention paid to the *Bawomataluo* tourist destination. The government has performed the hegemonic practice through its policies, and the local people perform the counter-hegemony through the ownership of and the ability they have to perform the tourist attractions. Through this article, it is suggested that the government and local people should develop the *Bawomataluo* tourist destination without performing the hegemonic practice and

counter-hegemonic practice. Through the solid cooperation among the stakeholders, they can build the facilities and infrastructures needed to develop the tourist destination.

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