

THE RE-EXISTENCE OF MURALS AS A MEDIUM OF CRITICISM IN THE MODERN DIGITAL ERA

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Abstract

One viral topic among Indonesian social media users in 2021 is the controversy regarding the removal of a mural in the public sphere by Authorities in many Provinces. This mural phenomenon is inversely proportional to the current condition where information and communication technology has developed rapidly as to why traditional methods of criticism such as murals reappear in today's modern era. In contrast, modern society prefers to use digital tools such as smart gadgets. This article explains the logical correlation of mural re-existence as a critical medium in the digital era. This research was designed as a descriptive qualitative study, and this research data was taken from pictures of viral deleted murals on social media. The analysis reveals that the re-existence of the mural as a critical medium in public spaces is due to the many cases of police reports related to the UU ITE. Besides, murals are more persuasive and direct, as means murals cause certain effects for the observer.

Keywords: Mural, social criticism, digital era, UU ITE.

Abstrak

Salah satu topik viral di kalangan pengguna media sosial Indonesia pada tahun 2021 adalah kontroversi penghapusan mural di ruang publik oleh otoritas di banyak provinsi. Fenomena mural ini berbanding terbalik dengan kondisi saat ini dimana teknologi informasi dan komunikasi telah berkembang pesat. Tetapi, mengapa metode kritik tradisional seperti mural muncul kembali di era modern saat ini, di mana masyarakat modern lebih memilih untuk menggunakan alat digital seperti gadget pintar. Oleh sebab itu, artikel ini menjelaskan korelasi logis re-eksistensi mural sebagai media kritik di era digital. Penelitian ini dirancang sebagai penelitian deskriptif-kualitatif. Data penelitian ini diambil dari gambar mural yang dihapus viral di media sosial. Hasil analisis mengungkapkan bahwa re-eksistensi mural sebagai media kritis di ruang publik disebabkan banyaknya kasus laporan polisi terkait UU ITE. Selain itu, mural lebih bersifat persuasif dan langsung, karena mural menimbulkan efek tertentu bagi pengamatnya.

Kata Kunci: Mural, kritik sosial, era digital, UU ITE.

BACKGROUND

In 2021, one viral topic among Indonesian social media users was the controversy regarding the removal of a mural in the public sphere by Authorities in many Provinces, such as in Jakarta (Kompas.com); Pasuruan (WartaBromo.com); in Tangerang (cnnindonesia.com); in Bogor (SuaraBogor.id); in Jogjakarta

(news.detik.com); in Bandung (Gelora.co); in Banjarmasin (cnnindonesia.com); and in others Provinces. The contents of the deleted murals are generally criticisms of the Indonesian government's policies in dealing with Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19). The following four images are the most viral deleted mural on social media.



Picture 1. Mural 'Tuhan Aku Lapar'



Picture 2. Mural 'Wabah Sesungguhnya adalah Kelaparan'



Picture 3. Mural 'Dipaksa Sehat di Negara yang Sakit'



Picture 4. Mural '404: Not found'

This mural phenomenon is inversely proportional to the current condition of rapidly developing information and communication technology. Today people are increasingly easy to access various information from various parts of the world. In addition, information and communication technology also allows people to socialize through various social media. But why are the traditional method of criticism, such murals reappearing in today's modern era? Whereas modern society prefers to use digital tools such as smart gadgets. This article explains the logical correlation of mural re-existence as a critical medium in the digital era.

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

This research was designed as a descriptive-qualitative study. Descriptive-qualitative means to describe in detail and depth the description of the actual conditions that occur according to what is in the field. Besides that, the interpretative phenomenology paradigm is also

applied as a methodology. Interpretative phenomenology is based on the premise that 'everyone has their own interpretation based on their background knowledge (Moleong, 2011). However, this research focused on interpretation about re-existence mural in the public sphere. The data in this research taken from news in mass media about 'the viral deleted murals in public sphere'.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Using murals as a medium of criticism to avoid UU ITE

Since the issuance of Indonesia's policy on information and cybercrime in 2008 (*UU No.11 Tahun 2008 - change by UU No.19 tahun 2016 tentang Informasi dan Transaksi Elektronik/ UU ITE*), many people have been trapped/punished as a crime with this policy. Based on the Indonesian National Police Report, cases of reports related to the UU ITE are increasing every year, especially between 2018 to 2020. In 2018 reported 4.360 cases; in 2019 reported 4.582 cases, and in 2020 reported 4.790 cases (see Figure 1).

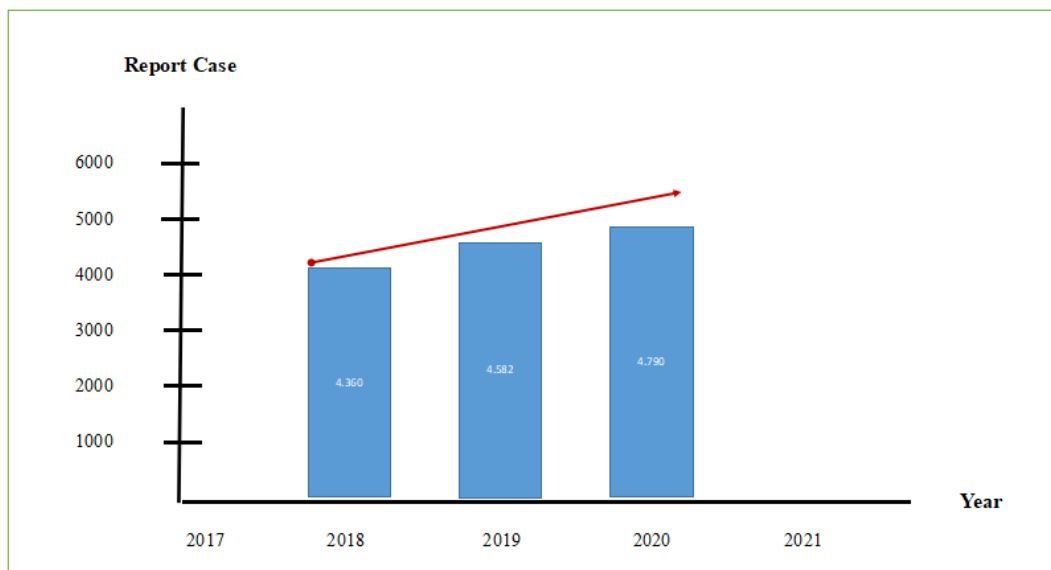


Figure 1. The increasing of UU ITE police report cases graphic
(source: antaranews.com)

LBH-YLBHI claims that cases of police reports regarding to the UU ITE are dominated by violations of public expression (speech and social media contents) with detail: violating in speech expression orally (26%), violating speech expression by demonstration (25%), violating in speech expression in digital media (17%), violating in sharing information in social media (16%), and violating in sharing personal data in social media (16%). More specific, Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network (SAFEnet) claims that thousands of cases of police reports regarding to the UU ITE are dominated by reporting of violating of chapter 27 subsection (3) about a blemish to one's good name and chapter 28 subsection (2) about hate speech (hukumonline.com, 2021).

Responding to increasing cases of police reports regarding the UU ITE, SAFEnet and Indonesia Youth IGF said most community members feel unsafe and uncomfortable with the UU ITE as a policy because it threatens freedom of expression, especially the expression on social media. Besides that, SAFEnet and Indonesia International Amnesty (IIA) considers the increase in cases of police

reports regarding the UU ITE shows a decline in the quality of Indonesian democracy. (uns.ac.id, 2021). Related to that, it makes sense that some Indonesian are trying to find alternative media such as murals in the public sphere to express their thoughts. The murals can avoid UU ITE because mural artists are not easy to track by Authority.

Murals are more persuasive and directive

According to Cangara (2014), communication is the process by which an individual (the communicator) transmits stimuli (usually verbal symbols) to modify the behavior of the individuals (the audiences) (in Mulandono & Irhandyaningsih, 2019). It is because communication is related to the process of socialization that can place individuals in the social structure. Therefore, humans need strategies in communicating so that others can respond. In this case, murals can be an alternative to be used as a communication tool (Wahyudi et al., 2017). Then through criticism, murals can appear as a tool to express the creators' ideas (Nurchayawati &

Alfisyahrin, 2021). It means that murals can be a medium for social criticism.

Social criticism is an activity related to judging, comparing and revealing about social conditions; related to values, traditions, and rules/laws in society. Social critic is also one kind of society communication that functions as social control to the Authority as leader of social system and to lead social changes. In this context, social critic became one of most important variable in control the process of social system. Besides, social critics can also reveal conservative thoughts, status quo, and vested interest in society. However, the social criticism carried out by mural does not show the extreme deviations that occur in society in detail. It can be in the form of satirical expressions, using funny visualizations or it can also use symbols that represent the intent of the social criticism.

Intention is an important factor in deciding what constitutes a message in mural (Bengtsen, 2013). The creator's purpose can be stated or not, consciously or unconsciously. This goal can be informative, persuasive, control, and others depending on what interests are behind it. From an art perspective, murals are said to be street art that presents visual images. However, murals are not just a "symbol" or as a "tool" of beauty, but also as a communication tool that is also present as a force that shapes thoughts and feelings (Dewi & Zaini, 2016) which is based on the rationality of knowledge (Masnah, 2020). According to Jannah (2017), in making murals the creators use their creativity to describe the reality of their world. In this case, the creators in making their work is based on something they sees in general, such as social phenomena or events that touch on state problems. It means that communication conveyed through murals is intended to provide

information and re-present reality (Ruben & Stewart, 2014).

Related to viral deleted mural in social media, the topic discuss in mural are generally criticisms of the Indonesian government's policies in dealing with Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic, for examples mural "*Tuhan aku lapar*" 'God, I'm hungry' (Picture 1) and mural "*wabah sesungguhnya adalah kelaparan*" 'the real plague is hunger'(Picture 2). The two murals tell about "hunger or famine" which describes conditions during the pandemic, where the government implemented a regional quarantine/ lockdown policy to slowdown the pace of Covid-19. This policy drastically reduces economic activity and movement, resulting in national economic losses (Hadiwadoyo, 2020). The logical correlation between content in mural with government policy is 'Lockdown causes an economic crisis, then an economic crisis causes a lot of people to starve'.

Conceptually, the murals in Picture 1 and 2 focus on discourse through verbal communication in conveying criticism. Unlike the mural "*dipaksa sehat di negara yang sakit*" 'forced to be healthy in a sick country' (Picture 3) and the mural "404, not found" (Picture 4), the message conveyed uses a combination of character figure and writing. In this case, the main messenger is the figure, while the writing is a description of the figure, this technique called layer of meaning (Yendra et al, 2020). In Picture 3 there are figures of 2 cats resembling humans (personifications) who display mysterious expressions. The cat figure is an analogy of those in power (Authorities) who are happy in difficult times. This is correlated with cases in government institutions that corrupt funds to deal with Covid-19, which is then likened to "a sick country".

In Picture 4, there is a figure similar to “the president of Indonesia, Jokowi” with eyes closed by the words “404, not found” which is a term to describe something that is sought but not found. The term “404: Not Found” comes from the Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire (CERN). CERN is a European organization that conducts nuclear research. According to famous rumor, in the CERN building there is a room numbered 404, but in fact this room never existed. So, the logical correlation between the figure of the President of Indonesia and the term '404 not found' is the assumption “president is not present in the suffering of his people due to Covid-19”. This is an expression of the people's disappointment with their president.

Base the explanation above, can be concluded that mural is an expression of ideas or messages of the maker through symbols in the form of images, colors, writing and others forms. It will be communicative if the public can understand the language conveyed. It will also be impressive if there is a uniqueness in the presentation so that it will appear special and easily distinguished from others. This means that using visual symbols in visual language with special distinctions and characteristics will cause certain effects for the observer. This is sometimes difficult to achieve when using verbal language. Compared to other media such

as mass media (TV, radio, or newspapers) which at first glance, murals are more durable and have long-lasting effects. Therefore, it makes sense that the best way to combat murals is to remove them from public spaces.

CONCLUSION

One of viral topic among Indonesian social media users in 2021 is the controversy of removal of mural in public sphere by Authorities in many Provinces. This mural phenomenon is inversely proportional to the current condition where information and communication technology have developed rapidly. Why are traditional method of criticism such murals reappearing in today's modern era. In contrast, modern society prefers to use digital tools such as smart gadgets. In conclusion the analysis reveals that the re-existence mural as a critical medium in public spaces is due to the many police reports related to the UU ITE. Besides, murals are more persuasive and direct, as means as mural cause certain effects for the observer. In addition the special potential of visual language such mural are: first, visual language has the opportunity to be understood more quickly and directly than verbal, written, spoken, or voice language. Second, visual language can be more permanent than sound language. Third, visual language has a very strong opportunity for its symbolic value.

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