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The impacts of rural tourism initiatives on cultural landscape sustainability in Borobudur area

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Abstract

This study focuses on community-based rural tourism initiatives conducted by village communities in Borobudur Sub-district. There are 7 out of 20 villages taken as case study. It aims to evaluate the rural tourism activities, especially its impacts on the landscape elements in relation with the cultural landscape sustainability. Using interviews and field survey, a mapping on landscape elements changes had been carried out and then analyzed to know the transformation. It is clarified that there are a number of changes on landscape elements in each villages. Five types of changes are found: addition, continue, customize, transform, and repair. The changes that are improving or increasing the value of landscape are considered as part of an evolutive conservation. Meanwhile, we should aware about the uncontrolled tourism development that will lead to the character changes.

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Keywords: rural tourism; cultural landscape; landscape element; tourism impact; Borobudur

1. Introduction

Borobudur Temple is a world largest Buddhist temple that was built by *Syailendra* Dynasty around 8th century. Borobudur Temple compound is then inscribed in the World Heritage List in 1991. The temple is a major tourist destination in Indonesia which attracts around 3 million domestics and foreign visitors annually. It is also surrounded by vast cultural landscapes heritages. Taylor¹ said that Borobudur Temple and its surrounding landscape resemble a

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huge amphitheatre where the temple stands in the center and surrounded by mountains. This new perspective of cultural landscape on Borobudur area has been acknowledged since around 2003. Since then, awareness on the importance of cultural landscape conservation in the area has increased, even mentioned in the UNESCO-ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring Mission in July 2003.²

Hence, integrating these landscapes into Borobudur tourism scheme is important in conserving the temple. Lane³ mentioned that the concept of sustainability in rural tourism must be a multi-purpose one if it is to succeed. It should aim to sustain the culture and characters of host communities, as well as the landscape and habitat. In the case of Borobudur, there are several rural tourism movements have flourished in the area.⁴ So far, village tour is the most popular form of rural tourism activities in the area. It is aimed to reduce the excessive tourists overcrowding the temple as well as to promote the local villages' potentials.

During the rural tourism activities, local people have carried out some improvements on their village assets. These kinds of efforts bring impacts on the landscape elements. Therefore it is necessary to trace what happened with the landscape elements in the village, they changed or still remained as they were. It is thus important to conduct an investigation on the Borobudur villages' rural tourism initiatives to know the way they utilize village resources, the changes on village landscape elements and furthermore what is the impact on the sustainability of the cultural landscape in Borobudur area.

This study aims to evaluate the community-based rural tourism activities conducted by village communities in Borobudur Sub-district, especially the impacts of the activities they have on the area's cultural landscape elements.

2. Methodology

This study uses mainly qualitative method using field research approach. This approach requires the author to go 'into the field' to observe the phenomenon and condition in natural state, take extensive notes and gather qualitative data for analysis.⁵ This study has been carried out since early 2003, therefore it can be considered as a longitudinal field research.⁶⁻⁷ Such research is required to trace the changing conditions as well as the progress of community activities in Borobudur Sub-district which are dynamically transforming.

This study uses field survey and interview as the main data collection. Firstly, a preliminary survey was conducted to know the contents and coverage of rural tourism activities in Borobudur Sub-district. From the data, villages that actively involved are selected as case study for further investigation. Secondly, a mapping on villages' tourism potentials were carried out to know the way they utilize the resources and to trace the changes of landscape elements in the village due to the rural tourism activities. Finally, the analysis was taken place to classify the process of changes using certain parameter to recognize its transformation.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Literature review

Cultural landscape is characterized as the balanced relation between ecological system and human influence. It is a manifestation of the interaction between the human and the natural environment, which is reflected in space and time and is always evolving.⁸ The issues on cultural landscape have emerged since the early of 20th century and have been raised globally in the past three decades. Beforehand, since the Industrial Revolution, the consideration of Western people always shows that nature is opposite to culture.⁹

The idea of cultural landscape was initially emerged from the field of geography, and then later on it influenced many other fields such as city planning, rural planning, as well as heritage conservation. Attempts to define cultural landscapes have been made since the early 1990s.¹⁰ Through long attempts, nowadays the idea of cultural landscape has spread worldwide. Over the past three decades, recognition of the heritage value of cultural landscapes has contributed to an expanded vision for the field of historic conservation in many countries. The awareness on the importance of cultural landscape conservation has also arisen among the academia and practitioners. In Indonesia, the concept of cultural landscape is expressed using the word of '*saujana*' which means '*sejauh mata memandang*' (as far as eyes can see). Indonesian Charter for Heritage Conservation describes the *saujana* heritage as 'inextricable unity between nature and manmade heritage in space and time'.¹¹

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