

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The foremost and largest global framework for international cooperation today- the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as its accompanying 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - is founded upon the concept of Sustainable development or sustainability (IISD, 2020). Defining the term ‘sustainable development’ has been a subject of debate as scholars have been unable to reach a consensus about what sustainable development means or what it is aiming for (Jickling, 1992). With Sustainable development having many definitions, the most quoted definition is from the 1987 United Nation's Brundtland Report as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987:8). Critics of this definition and discourse on Sustainable Development such as Scott and Gough (2003:2[r] in Hofverberg et al., 2017:9) argue that “the discourse of sustainable development does not present a straightforward answer or solution to global challenges. Rather, it introduces the different definitions of sustainable development that have emerged in different practices, both in relation to the main purposes of these practices and how the practice understands the environment, our place in it and the consequences of our actions.” Jabareen, (2008:179) asserts that “a review of the multidisciplinary literature on sustainable development (SD) reveals a lack of a comprehensive theoretical framework for

understanding sustainable development and its complexities”. While the debate rages on, scholars such as Beatley and Manning (1998) while noting that the concept of Sustainable Development needs definition and elaboration, they posit that sustainability in a general sense is a good thing.

Notwithstanding the many definitions and contest about the term, there exist points at which these definitions meet, some of which Ferraro et al. (2012) list to include a commitment to: democratic and inclusive processes which gives people the freedom to decide and act in ways that impacts both their present and future; equity and socially just outcomes; consideration for the needs of future generations; a lifestyle that supports eco-sustainability and the environment; consideration for the longevity of the planet and of Life in its multiple forms.

The 1992 Earth Summit of Rio coupled with the release of the Agenda 21 which outlined actionable and practical programmes to spur sustainability helped move the contests on Sustainable Development farther along as it unleashed a wide array of academic debates and a variety of environmental initiatives around the globe involving not just governments, but also non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international agencies and corporations alike (Ferraro et al., 2012). It was at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 that the interdependence of the three pillars of Sustainable Development- society, the economy, and the environment- was avowed. This new conception of sustainability has “encouraged us to see sustainability as a long-term, strategic thinking that promotes effective stewardship of the world’s resources” (Ferraro et

al., 2012:3) while also highlighting the absolute environmental constraints without disregard for its social and human aspects (Dresner, 2002 in Ferraro et al., 2012).

In order to see tangible Sustainable Development and achieve Agenda 2030 by the year 2030, the 17 SDGs building on the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted by all United Nations Member States (193 countries) in 2015, with 169 universal targets applying to and committing all countries and stakeholders to collaboratively partner together so as to bring an end to poverty and hunger, protect the planet from degradation, with the aim of supporting the needs of present and future generations (UN 2000, 2015; IISD, 2020). The 17 SDGs and its targets were framed as “integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental” (UN 2015:35) thereby forming an indivisible whole (Griggs et al. 2013; Nilsson et al. 2016).

With only 10 years to go in achieving the SDGs, there is an urgent need to speed up effectiveness and efficiency of actions as report reveals that the progress made so far remains insufficient for Agenda 2030 to become a reality (Report of Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, 2019 in Scharlemann et al., 2020). A multi-sectorial approach involving governments, NGOs, international and national corporations and agencies, private businesses and organisations as well as individuals are therefore required to work together and contribute to ensuring delivery of tangible Sustainable Development come 2030. It is for this reason that this research makes an inquiry into the contributions of the Creative Communities to Sustainable Development.

Environmental sustainability lies at the center of the SDGs (Asian Development Bank et al., 2019). Hence, the recognition of the environment as one of the three pillars of sustainability highlights the issue of environmental degradation as the main challenge facing the modern world while calling for an urgent transition to sustainable development which allows for economic progress, albeit in a manner that does not jeopardise the natural environment, as a feasible means of curbing the situation (Polynczuk-alenius, 2015). This transition to a sustainability friendly lifestyle is what some scholars agree that nation-states cannot achieve alone (Micheletti et al. 2012:143; Spaargaren & Oosterveer 2010:1890), hence the need for transnational cooperation among governments such as the UN is spearheading and individuals as active agents of transition (Polynczuk-alenius, 2015).

Sustainable development within the Indonesian context, especially in Bali is best understood within the Balinese concept of Tri Hita Karana. Tri Hita Karana is believed by the Balinese to help create harmony and balance of life also known as the three sources/causes of harmony and happiness between: Man and God his creator (*Parhayangan*); Man and the natural environment where he resides (*Palemahan*); and Man with his fellow humans (*Pawongan*) (Gede et al., 2016; Pickel-Chevalier & Ketut, 2016; Wijaya & Artajaya, 2020). As this concept does not contradict the three pillars of sustainability, this study will examine the extent to which this Balinese concept impacts on the sustainability efforts of the creative community in Bali.

The media is seen as one of the major pillars of economic growth playing a vital role towards sustainability, it is saddled with the responsibility of keeping the populace abreast of happenings in the society (Sabyasachi, et al., 2017). Media ability to bring about perception, behavioural and attitudinal change among members of the public which is required for sustainable development to take place makes it imperative for the media to communicate unambiguously. This is because, communication for sustainable development has gone beyond just ‘communication’ and mere sending of ‘messages’ to ‘constructing realities’ and ‘inter-subjective meaning’ (Parahita, 2016). The understanding, contemplation and sharing of various stakeholders’ realities is what communication for sustainable development is about (Mefalopulous, 2005). Because of the enormity of Agenda 2030, the acknowledgement that governments cannot achieve this Agenda alone requires a responsible media to partner with governments to engender widespread community education about Sustainable Development and ensure an informed and active citizenry (Kumar & Gupta, 2016). This highlights the role of media in casting a panoramic view of sustainable development to the populace. A study by the Centre on Sustainable Consumption and Production (CSCP) notes that while the subject of sustainability is enjoying global attention and increasing internet coverage as a result of “a new grassroots movement among well informed citizens”, the study is concerned that “it has been a challenge over recent years to design and implement media formats with potential to both influence people and provide them with accurate and authentic sustainability information” hence the “need to demonstrate how sustainability

topics can be integrated in existing as well as in new, emerging and not yet existing media formats” (UNEP/Wuppertal Institute Collaborating Centre on Sustainable Consumption and Production, 2010:5-6).

As a response to the concern raised by the CSCP study, this research looks into the phenomenon of digital activism, also known as social media activism, as one way the media is responding to integrate sustainability topics in media format, while contributing its quota to achieving the sustainability goals by ensuring an informed and active citizenry. Sivitasnides & Shah, (2011) note the debatable nature of the term “digital activism”, however that term is preferred for the fact that it describes in clear terms the factors which account for the success of modern day activism. These factors include the reliability, scale, speed and increasing internet affordability. Lim (2013:637) corroborates this noting that inherent in digital activism is the propensity to be “fast, thin and many” i.e. the same way campaigns appear online is the same manner in which they disappear without trace. For Lim, (2013) a combination of innovation and experimentation with regards to the use of novel media technologies and participatory culture is understood as social media activism as “online expression, popular culture, combined with sociality, create multiple spheres where millions...come together” (Lim, 2013:654), resulting in what Lim, (2014:51) refers to as “the entanglement of digital media with social movements.” This provides the basis for which this study researched the digital activism of the creative community movement- *Merah Putih Hijau*, and how significant a force this activism is in transforming the larger society of Bali when it comes to environmental sustainability.

While the term “creative communities” is yet to have a standardized definition, its meaning could vary based on contexts ranging from historical to economic, geographical and even political contexts amongst others. Darras (2018:2) offers the definition of a creative community as “any convergence of individuals who combine their talents in favor of change, creation, innovation, and advancement”. In the same vein, Visser (2016) defines a creative community as “A group of people with shared characteristics unified by a common idea or problem to solve, who come together to act, create and share.” Both definitions attempt to distinguish a creative community from just any community of people. Visser (2016) explains that the need to act, create and share is what sets a creative community apart from just about any community. Hill et al. (2014) and Sawyer (2008) cited in Darras (2018) posit that the convergence of people in any place leads to a situation where their talents form a cluster from where collective genius emanates from. This collective genius is what comes in handy as many creative communities transform themselves into sustainable entrepreneurs helping the business community to create globalisation with a human face (Meroni, 2007), participating as active agents in the transition process into a more sustainable environment.

Having been in existence throughout history, creative communities exist everywhere, with a possibility of not differing much from one another (Meroni, 2007), have in the face of great challenges resorted to its community advantage, and responded innovatively to opposition thereby improving on approaches that already exists (Darras, 2018). Corroborating this innovative response of creative

communities, Meroni (2007) points to the creative communities, composed of individuals thinking outside the box, as a key driver for sustainable innovation such as is needed to ensure sustainability and achieving the Agenda 2030.

Asia and the Pacific has in the past years experienced exceptional economic growth, however, this economic growth has come with significant environmental costs which carries the potential to subvert the gains made so far, as well as compromise the promise of sustainable development and social development (Asian Development Bank et al., 2019). Since the sustainable development is composed of the economic, social and environmental pillars, Asian Development Bank et al., (2019) report argues that progress towards environmental sustainability across the region has been insufficient to achieve environmental goals and targets such as SDGs 12 on Responsible Consumption and Production, 14 on Life below Water and 15 on Life on Land.

Even though Indonesia was not exposed to plastic use until the late 20th century, pollution arising due to the use of plastic in the fourth most populous country in the world has seen the largest archipelago nation rank number two for plastic pollution in the world, thanks to its sprawling population and lack of safe disposal (Giesler, 2018; McCarthy, 2018) a threat to environmental sustainability and a classic example corroborating the 2019 Asian Development Bank report on Asia and the Pacific region's insufficient progress towards environmental sustainability. Adebayo (2018 in Giesler, 2018) notes that every year, Indonesia generates around 1.15 and 2.41 million tons of plastic waste, while the ASEAN

Post (2018) puts the figure at an estimated 3.22 million metric tons of plastic waste which finds its way annually into the ocean surrounding Indonesia.

After coming under fire for its lack of laws and regulations regarding plastic pollution by international organisations like the United Nations (UN) and the G20, President Joko Widodo, pledged at the 2017 UN conference to join the Clean Seas Campaign as well as Indonesia's commitment to reduce plastic waste in 25 coastal cities and marine litter by seventy per cent by 2025 (UNEP, 2017). This pledge was followed by a policy formulation announced on the 23rd of October, 2018 known as Presidential Regulation no. 97/2017 which outlines Indonesia's plan to reduce waste generation from source by thirty per cent and subsequently manage waste by at least 70% thereby allowing only a fragment of solid waste to reach landfill (Bahraini, 2018 in Giesler, 2018).

Critical to any social science research is the social setting which is the social context within which the research is carried out. Hence the social setting refers to a physical environment or a community where a social phenomenon takes place. The social setting therefore takes into consideration factors such as culture and norms, and power relations. This research study's social setting includes what (social phenomenon- Sustainable Development), where (location- Bali) and who (subjects- MPH).



Figure 1.1 (*Map of Bali. Source: Google image, 2020*)

Bali, known as the island of the gods (*pulau dewa*) is a small island with an area of 5,636.66 km² or 0.29% of the total area of Indonesia (Anonym. 2015 in Antara & Sumarniasih, 2017) and is reputedly the most famous island of the more than 17,000 islands that comprise the Indonesian archipelago. Geographically, Bali is located close to the centre of the country “with a culture blending elements of the historically Indic culture of Java to the west and the more Austronesian cultures of the islands of Nusa Tenggara to the east” (MacRae, 2018:13). Howe (2005) states specifically the location of the tropical island of Bali in the middle of the Indonesian archipelago at about 8° south. Densely populated, with over four million inhabitants, the island is a top tourist destination with steady increase in the number of international tourists visiting from a little over three million tourists in 2013, to over six million international tourists visiting in 2019 i.e. an increase of about 275,000 tourists from 2018 record (Howe, 2015; Brinkhoff, 2020; Bali Tourism Directory, 2020). Reiterating its place as a tourist destination, Bali, in

2015 ranked second place out of the world's ten best islands according to the American Travel and Leisure Magazine as a travel destination and relaxation place (Antara & Sumarniasih, 2017).

Regarded as more affluent than most parts of Indonesia, Bali, with regards to economy and contemporary culture, is more integrated to the global economy and culture via tourism (creative industry) than it is to the wider Indonesian economy and culture. With regards to culture, the island of Bali sees most Balinese refer to themselves as Hindus, with a significant Muslim minority in the north and Balinese Christian communities scattered around (Howe, 2005; MacRae, 2018).

A partnership involving Bali's Waste Management Task Force, the provincial Environmental Agency (DLH) and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was set up to tackle waste management in Bali, also in 2018 a ban was placed on use of plastic (bags, straws, polystyrene) by the Governor of Bali, all in a bid to actualize Indonesia's commitment to reduce ocean plastic by seventy per cent in 2025 (Gapura Bali, 2019; Siddharta, 2019). The report from this partnership revealed that about 1.6 million tonnes of waste each year is generated in Bali. A breakdown of this waste showed that plastic waste made up around 303,000 tonnes of the 1.6 million tonnes, with some 33,000 tons leaking into Bali's waterways annually. The report further found that over three times of the waste generated by residents of Bali is actually generated by Indonesian and international tourists. Also, only around seven per cent of Bali's plastic waste is retrieved for the purpose of recycling, while only about forty eight per cent of

Bali's waste is handled by the 10-official landfills available on the island (Gapura Bali, 2019).

The 2018 Indonesian waste management laws allowed for the decentralization of the waste management system whereby provinces and villages in Indonesia can design their own models for waste management. It is in adherence to this law that the creative community movement, *Merah Putih Hijau* (MPH) and the municipal government of Bali reached an agreement to recycle waste and create revenues for the local communities.

The above explains why this research launched an inquiry into environmental sustainability with a focus on the creative community movement of *Merah Putih Hijau*. MPH falls under the category of new social movements (NSMs). The new social movements as theorized by sociologists aims to give an explanation for the kind of social movements prevalent since post-industrial economy (1960s) and are a sharp contrast from the previous traditional social movement which bothered mainly on political, economic and military security. The focus of new social movements is on “bringing about social mobilization through cultural innovations, the development of new lifestyles, and the transformation of identities” (*Social Movements | Boundless Sociology*, n.d.; *Social Movements | Introduction to Sociology*, n.d.). The new social movements extol and promote substitute values and understandings as it relates to the social world. The environmental movement which has gained universal prominence is an example, having been around since the late 1960s, birthing a different way of viewing the relationship between economy, society, and nature (*Social Movements | Boundless Sociology*, n.d.).

Having identified a major problem with the old conventional waste management system, MPH came up with what it calls the “MPH Circular Approach” to waste management in Bali which recycles up to 90 per cent of waste, thereby reducing waste to landfill drastically. By reducing, reusing and recycling waste, and agitating for sorting at source, MPH works to ensure environmental sustainability. This approach focuses on establishing community owned resource management in villages in Bali. MPH’s goal is to deliver a comprehensive package to the community including a waste management building and facility design, a working operational plan, develop strategies and categories for waste separation, communication, measurement and transparent monitoring system of recycling performance using a software (Sean Nino Lotze, et al., 2017; MPH, 2020).

MPH sees to the funding of operations for the first 6 -12 months in every village after which it hands over to the community for onward self-management. The MPH approach is unique in the sense that it will also provide a material code book, coordinate local community meetings and events, help build a buyer-customer base and make finances transparent alongside working to increase the province’s recycling rates and cut cost for tax payers. The first model of this approach commenced in Mengwi village of Pererenan, with around 1000 households, chosen for the pilot project, dealing creatively with waste, and converting waste to wealth by providing jobs and educating all the people involved (Sean Nino Lotze, et al., 2017; Dojo Bali, 2017).

The MPH approach also features a participatory system and local communication strategy which allows all stakeholders such as households, private businesses, government, facility managers, etc. to participate in the development process. This feature ensures that the waste management and recycling facility in every village meets needs specific to it and so is custom made and useable. The participatory design focuses on key areas including separation processes and procedure from source (homes), collection, recycling and sale of materials separated at source. The circular approach touted by MPH has the potential to improve the rate of recycling ten times more than the conventional waste management method and at a reduced cost of 50 per cent less (Sean Nino Lotze, et al., 2017).

Recycling can be categorized under the craft and design subsector of creative industries. UNESCO (2017) describes the craft and design subsector as artisanal products made by artisans, the product may be made by hand completely, with use of hand tools or mechanical means. The important thing about it is that the artisan's direct manual contribution when weighed against the finished product remains the most sizable element. The creative product is made without limitation with regards to quantity and use of sustainable materials sourced from sustainable resources. The unique features of craft and design (artisanal) products vary from utilitarian, to artistic, creative, and aesthetic, can have cultural colouration or attachment. Other distinctiveness of craft products are that they can be decorative, traditional, functional, religiously and socially symbolic and significant (UNESCO, 2017).

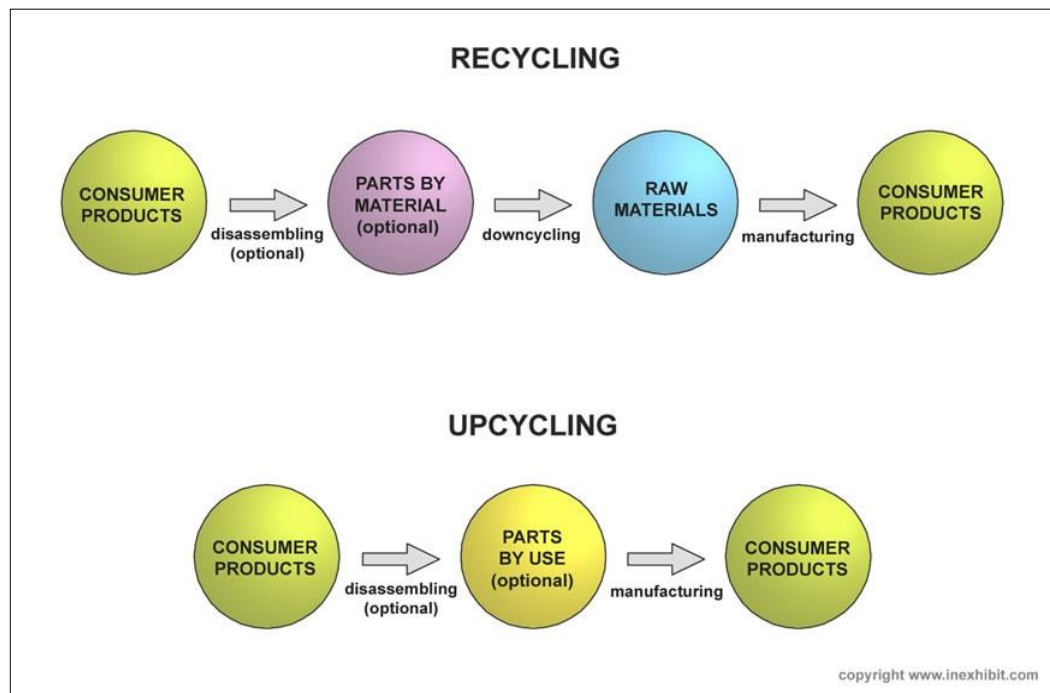


Figure 1.2 (Source: www.inexhibit.com. 2020)

The creative community of *Merah Putih Hijau* actively engages in recycling and advocates for same as a means of ensuring environmental sustainability. MPH recycles ninety per cent of the waste and in the process helps create wealth for the local community (MPH, 2020). The focus for MPH is separation from source which helps to separate organic (food/kitchen waste) from inorganic materials (plastic, paper, bottles, etc.) to allow for recycling, composting, and reuse locally in order to reduce waste that gets to the land fill. MPH recycles and its major product is from organic materials such as kitchen waste, which is recycled and used in making products such as compost for soil nutrients and plants, nutrients for aquatic feeds and livestock feeds. The waste from inorganic materials such as bottles, polythene, aluminum tins, glass, paper, among others are gathered for onward transmission to other recyclers who either recycle or upcycle them. These products include bottles, food packs, flower vases, key holders and

other souvenirs among others which are sold in the local market and reused (MPH, 2020).

The difference between recycling and upcycling is that the former makes use of or reuses the components of a product after it has gone through degradation-liquefied, crunched, etc.- it becomes a raw material and then is used in making a new product. Upcycling on the other hand creatively reuses an object in part or all such that the function remains similar as previous use or different (Lusiardi, 2019). An example of upcycled product is a glass jar converted into a flower vase.

This research therefore explores the collection of individuals into a creative community (MPH) and how they act as agents advocating for and supporting a transition from the norm into a sustainable environment via the instrumentality of digital activism. To this end, the research adopts Giddens Structuration theory with a focus on agency because it helps to figure out and study the social practice of the creative community (waste management and digital advocacy for community owned waste management and recycling facility in Bali metropolis), and the difference it makes to outcomes (the impact of this advocacy in supporting a transition from the norm to an environmentally sustainable lifestyle). Also, Castells' theory of Network Society to evaluate the three features of flexibility, scalability and survivability of the creative community as a network of society capable of organizing and restructuring the society into one that is environmentally sustainable.

1.2 Research Question

The study is guided by these research questions:

1. How is MPH using digital media to promote its activism/advocacy towards sustainable development?
2. How does MPH, as a creative community movement, support a process of change towards a more environmentally sustainable society by its agency role within a network of society?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study explores the issue of sustainable development through the lens of MPH as a creative community based in Bali, Indonesia. It intends to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify how MPH employs the media to promote its activism/advocacy for sustainable development.
2. To explore how MPH as a creative community movement supports a process of change towards a more environmentally sustainable society by playing the role of agency within its social networks.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is fundamentally significant in both practice and theory. The research study's significance lies in its quest to be different from previous studies on Sustainable Development as it takes a different approach to the subject from the point of view of creative communities and their contributions to achieving

sustainability especially in Bali where most researches and body of works on Sustainable Development has focused largely on tourism and nothing on the concept of creative communities.

Another significance of this study is in the sense that the theory employed in this study has not been used in the creative communities' context. In the same vein, the use of textual analysis methodology utilized in this present study is also significant as it will contribute to what Islam and Yuhan (2018) argues is still at its infancy in the study of environmental sustainability. This will therefore help to reveal gaps for their inclusion in the study of sustainability and the cultural and creative industries.

Furthermore, at the level of governance and policy making, the study will generate data that can promote quality policies formulation and implementation on sustainability to accelerate progress so as to achieve the 2030 Agenda not just in Bali and Indonesia, including other nations of the world. Governments, media practitioners, cultural and creative leaders, employers of labour and other stakeholders would be motivated by the study's findings.