

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Deriving from the notion of *youth subculture* which is identical with a special form of organization of the activities of the youth that relatively autonomous and different in its norms, values, institutes, lifestyles, and thinking whose nature ranges from social protest to artistic circles (Oparina, et al. 2020), Serikat Mural Surabaya is one among many which becomes the most active community in Surabaya whose identity is recognized as youth subculture group. The practice of Serikat Mural Surabaya is mostly visible with their mural artworks on public space (ie. walls). Their artistic activity is as a means of response towards political phenomena which become main concern of the community (Anin 2018).

The existence of subculture *scenes* in Surabaya is a common view that contains *youth* activity within the city. Subculture *scenes* in the city is identical with artistic disciplines such as *underground music* and *street art* (Fajar 2018). These *scenes* represent retrospective domain within which each of the members identify their existence as part of *subculture* due to the ideas of independency, self-sufficiency and autonomy of which these values imply an “ideology”. This relates to the definition of *youth subculture* which is identical with relatively distinctive meanings around certain ideas, practices, and objects that young people

express their adherence to subculture (Haenfler 2014) (Oparina, et al. 2020). This is also reflected through the members within artistic *scenes* of the city which are inhabited by individuals and groups that constitute sense of identity, collectivity, collaboration and independency that subsequently establish what is called as scene. Within subcultural context, a *scene* can be defined as simultaneously a network of people who share a common identity and a common set of subcultural beliefs, norms, values, and conviction (Leach and Haunss 2014). In that, the similarity of interests upon art among them have become the main aspect of which art communities are made.

The street art scene in Surabaya is identical with *graffiti*, *murals*, *posters*, *stencils*, and *stickers* as a means of artistic practice (Fajar 2018). The emergence of street art was initially indicated by the portrayal of graffiti image AYO REK in Ngagel street area (Tiffany 2018) (Fajar 2018) as an outcast to the growth of street art activity which initially has begun in 2003 until recent days. The *scene* consists of street artists with various aesthetic styles such as graffiti, mural, and sticker art that they also make other form of street artworks such as posters, graffiti-stencils, and *wheatpaste*. Street art *scene* in Surabaya is inhabited by many collective groups and individual street artists. When Serikat Mural Surabaya expresses criticism through portrayal of their mural on public space, their practice in painting murals are under thematic representation toward present-day issue. Serikat Mural Surabaya perceives the world, which is articulated through their murals as by-product expression.

Nowadays, mural street artworks which are found on two different regions such as Tangerang and Pasuruan have gained media coverage that their street artworks as an expression of social concern based on recent situation and condition. In Tangerang, two mural street artworks which gained media coverage are “404 Not Found” and staging a character which allegedly resembles Jokowi’s face. The second one is known to have caption “Tuhan Aku Lapar”.

In Pasuruan, the mural is known to have staged two cartoon characters and have a caption “Dipaksa Sehat Di Negara Yang Sakit”. The mural street artworks can be seen below:



Picture 1 Mural in Tigaraksa, Tangerang



Picture 2 Mural in Batuaceper, Tangerang

Mural 'Dipaksa Sehat di Negara yang Sakit' Juga Dihapus

CNN Indonesia
Sabtu, 14/08/2021 17:31



Picture 3 Mural in Bangil, Pasuruan

These mural street artworks had to be covered up by local government and police department in those two regions. The appearance of mural which allegedly resembles Jokowi's face and having the caption "404 Not Found" in Tangerang (*picture 1*) had to be covered up by police department with black paint for it is accused to be insulting Jokowi whose existence as president is considered as nation's symbol (Arianti and Nugroho 2021). This has made the muralist who have done the painting is under police investigation for their mural is considered as humiliating nation's symbol (Arianti and Nugroho 2021) (L. Darmawan 2021). This also happened to the mural "Tuhan Aku Lapar" (*picture 2*) at the same region which had been covered up for it is considered as provocative (R. A. Darmawan 2021) (Agnes 2021). In Pasuruan (*picture 3*), local government argues that the mural street artwork violates Perda Pemkab Pasuruan number 2 year 2017 (municipal policy) which prohibits scribbling action on public facilities (Arifin 2021). Likewise, the caption "Dipaksa Sehat Di Negara Yang Sakit" is considered as inappropriate especially in the midst of pandemic situation (Arifin 2021). Therefore, it had been covered up as well.

The covering up mural street artworks by government has become national attention in Indonesia during pandemic outbreak which makes the issue to be controversial. The controversy has led to contentious debates that invites many pros and cons. Supporting opinions contend that mural is considered as a form of freedom of expression (Thea 2021) by which the doers utilising it to utter critics as well as a tool for delivering aspirations toward government (Tia 2021) (Ika 2021). For the appliance of mural onto public space, it is reasonably accepted

because mural is intended to either critizing, symbolizing, or expressing resistance and aspiration as well as containing political message which is to be seen by public (Zulfikar 2021) (Anin 2018) (Makdori 2021). Additionally, it is also argued that the mural street artworks which were subsequently covered up by local government and police department represent democratic regression in Indonesia (Thea 2021). Nevertheless, there comes opposite opinions in responding to the issue as well. Damsi, a coordinator of Pelukis Mural Lampung community, appraises that the action of painting mural on public space is considered as unethical for the artist does not have legal permission from government (Siddik 2021). For him, public space is under the law of government thereof an artist must prioritize ethical attitude by asking permission to the government for doing art on public space (Siddik 2021). The statement is in line with Moeldoko who states that the action is unethical which cannot be accepted in the context of delivering critic towards government (Taufiq 2021). For young generation, he adds, they must have ethic especially in doing art to speak for their aspiration (Taufiq 2021).

The issue of the government covering mural street artworks has prompted a response from an independent political organization, Aliansi Rakyat Bergerak, also known as Gejayan Memanggil, which has organized an event called "Lomba Mural Dibungkam." (Suryana and Rahadi 2021). The event has been starting for 23-31 August after mural street artwork in Kewek Brigde near Malioboro street which having a caption "DIBUNGKAM" had been covered up by local

government of Yogyakarta (Koes 2021) (Pangaribowo and Aprian 2021). The informations can be seen as follow:



Picture 4 Media coverage from Kompas regarding the issue of Mural “DIBUNGKAM” in Yogyakarta



Picture 6. Mural Street Artwork in Kewek Bridge, Yogyakarta



Picture 5. Announcement of Lomba Di Bungkam

The event is designed as a so-called “contest” that is publicly announced and documented via social media account @gejayanmemanggil with the hashtag #lombadibungkam which is subsequently participated by dozens of street artists in Indonesia from different cities such as Yogyakarta, Malang, Semarang, Tangerang, and Pematang (Pangaribowo and Aprian 2021) (CNN Indonesia 2021) (Suryana and Rahadi 2021). In fact, the participants come from Bali, Jakarta, Pati,

Bogor, Madura, Makassar, Pontianak, Purwakarta, Palembang, Riau, Karawang, Banjarmasin, Bangka Belitung, Kaimana (West Papua), Tegal, Salatiga, Wonogiri and Sumbawa. The information regarding the participants are inserted below:



Picture 7 The participant of Lomba Dibungkam's street artwork in Karawang



Picture 8 The participant of Lomba Dibungkam's street artwork in Tangerang



Picture 9 The participant of Lomba Dibungkam's street artwork in Madura

The “contest” is represented as a means of response towards the action of local authorities who have been covering up mural street artworks which containing critics upon current condition during pandemic outbreak in Indonesia that is considered as reactive, anti-critic, and repressive (Wawan 2021) (Suryana and Rahadi 2021). It can be seen from the pictures below:



Picture 10 Media coverage regarding Lomba Di Bungkam from Republica



Picture 11 Media coverage regarding Lomba Di Bungkam from Tempo



Picture 12 Media coverage regarding Lomba Di Bungkam from CNN Indonesia



Picture 13 Media coverage regarding Lomba Di Bungkam from Tempo

The emergence of the “contest” Lomba Di Bungkam indicates a symptom of trend which encourages many street artists to express their concern via street artworks as a means of expressing protest through art which is driven by recent issue regarding events conducted by government covering up mural street artworks. However, street artists in Surabaya do not seem to respond to the so-called “trend” or making street artworks that respond to the recent issue as well. Based on that condition, this research is conducted to provide an academic perspective to find out the substantial meaning that is derived from the *knowledge* of street artist in Surabaya that is articulated to become expression through *street art*.

Surabaya as the second largest city in Indonesia has a population of *street artists* whose existence is associated to street art scene of the city that their artistic practice is as a means of expression. Therefore, the aim of this study is to explain the implementation of artistic practice of street artists in Surabaya to express on public space through the perspective of habitus, capital and field introduced by

Pierre Bourdieu. Habitus as a key concept is suitable to understand practice for it produces tendency, inclinations, perceptions and action (Maton 2012) that will reveal meaning based on the knowledge of street artist as agent. For Bourdieu, knowledge can be beliefs, values, and the way one understands the world as well as current experience that construct the habitus (Webb, Schirato and Danaher 2002) (Maton 2012).

As this study takes location in Surabaya and mainly derives from the context of responsive expression that is done by street artists in different cities that participating on Lomba Di Bungkam during pandemic outbreak, the researcher takes Serikat Mural Surabaya (“SMS”) as an object of study for they have longstanding existence, still active and having independent stance in conducting their artistic practice as street art community in Surabaya. Likewise, “SMS” has their own set of disposition based on ideas, beliefs, norms, values and knowledge that they perceive as structuring aspect of which their habitus as community is constituted. These aspects will reveal sense of *agency* from “SMS” that retains freedom of expression as their artistic spirit which drives intention to conduct artistic practice under thematic names such as *Street Art Melawan*, *Seni Melawan Pandemi* and *Mural Serentak* as a representation of street art activity to express towards recent situation and condition and having other practices during pandemic outbreak as well. For *habitus* enacts the social agent to conduct certain practice when meets a particular problem, choice or context (Webb, Schirato and Danaher 2002), the notion enlightens how their intention to initiate the so-called movements based on their perceptions toward the world that is articulated through

street art to participate in public discourse during pandemic outbreak in Surabaya before the controversy regarding mural street artworks have become national attention. Likewise, in Bourdieu's terminology—the collective ideas, beliefs, norms, values and knowledge of Serikat Mural Surabaya will give a so-called meaning upon *street art* as it is actualized through their practice which represents *habitus*. Thus, this community is valid to be made as research object.



Picture 14 Serikat Mural Surabaya's mural artwork during PPKM

In summary, this study is also intended to enrich the previous study regarding Serikat Mural Surabaya by Irfan Ibnu Adnin (2018) entitling *Gerakan Mural Sebagai Wujud Komunikasi Politik (Studi Kasus Terhadap Karya Serikat Mural Surabaya)*. The study finds that the mural street artworks of Serikat Mural Surabaya are contained with political values of which they are embedded with intrinsic values of protest that responding to political situation and condition in Indonesia. Anin's study takes focus on five mural street artworks from SMS

which were located on five different areas in Surabaya such as Wonokromo, Dinoyo, Bratang, Ahmad Yani, and Walikota Mustajab (Anin 2018). The study uses two politic communication theories such as Politic Domination by James C. Scott and Politic Communication by McQuail which only takes focus on mural manifestations of Serikat Mural Surabaya as a form of political propaganda. However, Anin's study does not give explanation about mural as part of *street art* nor give explanation regarding recent development of *street art* in Surabaya during pandemic outbreak. In that case, this study is conducted to give understanding towards *how is street art* based on the perspective of Serikat Mural Surabaya that gives emphasize on the theory of *habitus* that subsequently correlates with the notion of *capital* and *field* by Pierre Bourdieu to describe their life as community. Likewise, this study is intended to enrich Anin's study that does not encompass to the current practice of Serikat Mural Surabaya and their other mural artworks that represent broader concern as by-product expression.

In addition to that, this study is meant to enrich a study from Obed Bima Wicandra (2013) entitling *Kontestasi Ruang Publik: Studi Mengenai Komunitas Mural Di Surabaya*. Obed's study examines that public space co-optation is not only done by *bourgeoisie*, rather it is done by street mural communities in Surabaya that co-optate public space as if it "their own". The study from Obed finds five strategies from street mural communities in Surabaya by using Jurgen Habermas's theory of *public space*. The five strategies of street mural communities in using public space as medium of work is similarly to be called as co-optation of which public space is not truly "democratic" and inclusive.

Likewise, it is found that street mural communities in Surabaya negotiate with local authority, private owners, and experience a conflict with graffiti-writers. Obed's study (2013) also finds that there is a consideration among street artists in Surabaya who are credited as *cool* in applying their street artworks without negotiating to private owners nor local authority while other street artists who ask for consent are considered otherwise. However, Obed's study does not examine clearly about existential matter which becomes something at stake for the street artists which has not yet determined. The correlation with aesthetical conflict and intentionality to apply street artworks from muralists and graffiti writers in Surabaya have not been discussed as well. Therefore, the study by Obed Bima Wicandra and Irfan Ibnu Anin will be enriched using Pierre Bourdieu's perspective to explain street art practice and distinct culture of *muralist* represented by Serikat Mural Surabaya which coexists with *graffiti-writer*.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Based on the Background of the Study above, Serikat Mural Surabaya brings the issue of community's practice. Thus, there are some interesting ideas that need to be discussed.

1. How is the practice of street artists in Surabaya including SMS when Lomba Di Bungkam has become a trend?
2. How is the habitus of SMS which have become their basis of practice as street art community?

3. How is street art field in Surabaya?

1.3 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Based on the questions stated in the Statement of The Problems, this study has objectives that are formulated as follows:

1. To describe the life of Serikat Mural Surabaya through their *habitus* as street art community

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of the study is to help future researcher who would like to conduct the same research using Bourdieu's theoretical framework that can use this study as a starting point. This research is to help student of cultural studies to read Bourdieu's theoretical framework especially on *habitus*, *capital* and *field* in simple way. Likewise, this study is intended to give knowledge and reference to cultural studies' students who would like to conduct the same topic regarding *street art* especially *mural*.

1.5 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

- a. *Habitus* refers to one's set of dispositions which generates practice in social world. Habitus can be understood as transposable and/or durable that embodies in one's own mind and bodily movement to which practice

is generated based on meaning-making aspect of social world as objective reality of oneself that correlates with subjectivity aspect. It mediates one's practice in social world of what should be done or what should not (Maton 2012)

- b. *Field* refers to social space in which social positions are located. Social positions are consist of agents who have specific position in particular field. Within the field, agents interact and improvise based on their habituses in specific field to gain or retain position (Thomson 2012)
- c. *Capital* refers to one's possession towards specific holdings. Capital are distinguished into four types: *cultural (recognizable knowledge)*, *social (knowing significant others to bolster up one's practice in field)*, *economic (money/assets)* and *symbolic (prestige, consecration or honour)* (Moore 2012)
- d. *Street Art* refers to art expression that usually correlates with movement of street artists through their manifestation of images on public spaces. Street art encompasses every genres within Contemporary Art such as graffiti, mural, stencils, sculptures, *etc.* Street Art movement carries social critics and subversion towards hegemonical power and producing their images typically on public spaces such as walls, and so on.
- e. *Agency*: an idea of individuals are equipped with the ability to understand and control their own actions, regardless of the circumstances of their lives that usually termed as "intentionality" and 'individuality' (Webb, Schirato and Danaher 2002).

- f. *Mural*: mural is categorized by Robert Sommer in 1975 as part of street art which is defined as an art form directed towards communicating with masses of inhabitants and passer-by (Blanche 2015) and is defined as painting on a big wall that the whole wall is fully painted by the artist and carries strongly social and political messages (Schulz 2017).