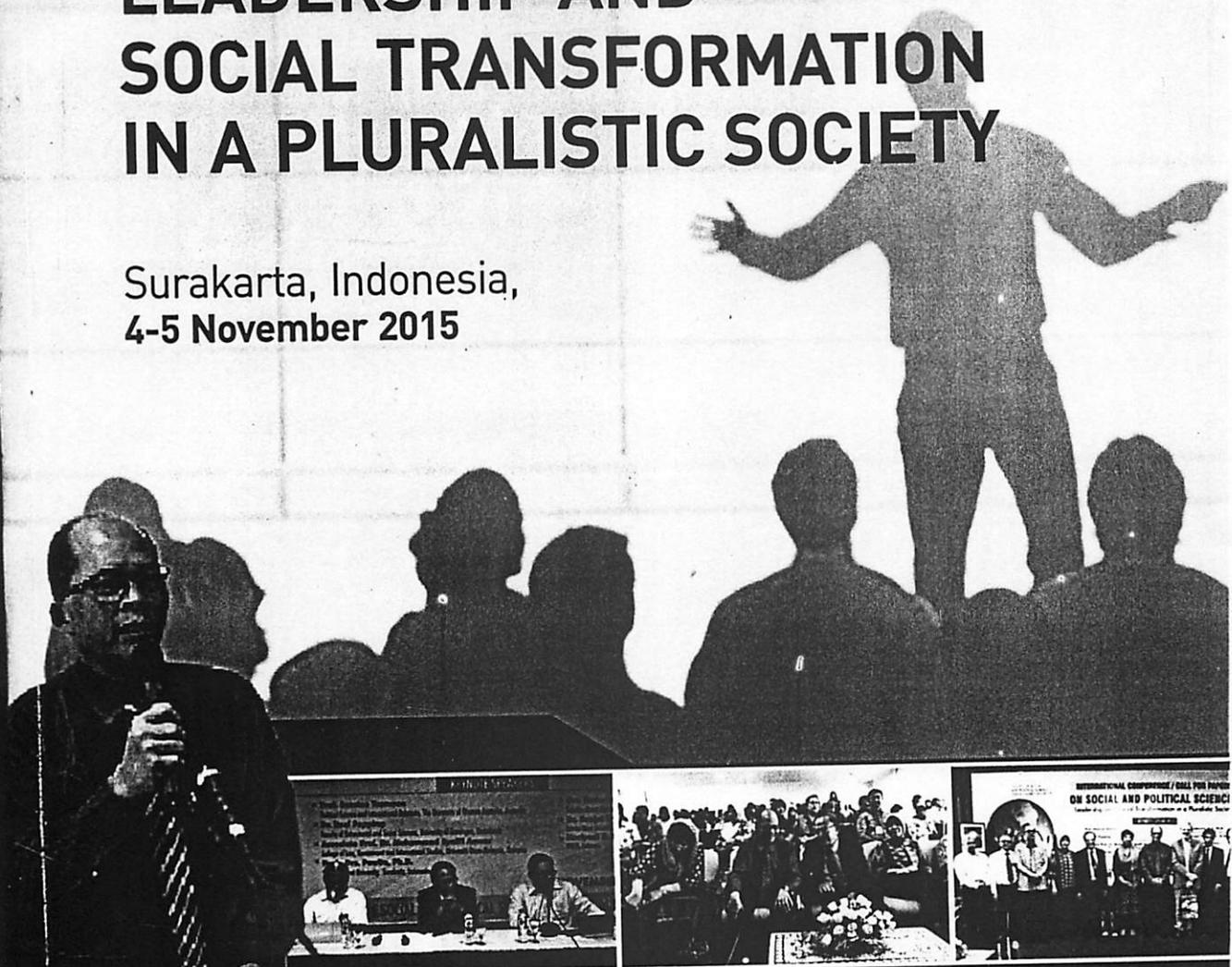


PROCEEDING

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SOCIAL
AND POLITICAL SCIENCES:

LEADERSHIP AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY

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THE ROLE OF THE TRADITIONAL MEDIA IN EDUCATING THE INDONESIAN NATION

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Communication plays an important role in facilitating relationships between human beings, who as social beings cannot live without one another. Human beings always live in communities, however simple they may be. Aristotle defined the human being as a “zoon politikon” or a social being. When living in a group, human beings must interact and communicate with one another, both in the form of speech or in working together to perform an activity. This phenomenon is referred to as communication, which means that in every social system there is always a communication system that is a broader form of the information system (Rachmadi, 2011: 2).

James Lull (2012:23) emphasizes the importance of communication as a mechanism through which relationships between human beings take place in several fields. Communication plays a role in all aspects of human life, including political, economic, social, and cultural aspects (Albert, 2011: 3). Since communication is essentially the main vehicle for day to day human life and activities, it is related to all areas of human life (Daniel Lerner, 2008: 23). The day to day life of human beings is strongly influenced by the communication that takes place with other people, including the messages conveyed by people from far away, even though we may not know them (Sutopo, 2012: 48).

In a society in which the mass media is still unknown, leaders of the community play an important role as opinion makers who ensure that forms of traditional art and other traditional performances are the main media of communication. This is something which nowadays people fail to make optimal use of. It would seem that today, many people regard these traditional media as being unimportant, whereas in primarily rural areas, they still play an important part in the community (HB Sutopo, 2005: 106). In fact, these traditional media support the modern mass media such as television, internet, and so on, or function as an interpreter for explaining information which is difficult for rural communities to comprehend (Sutopo, 2012: 45).

If we look at the conditions of Indonesian society today, with its variety of different cultural aspects, it is important for the government to cultivate and develop social

communication, in particular in outlying areas, by making good use of all the existing media, including both traditional and mass media, which complement one another, in order to improve the intellectual ability or level of education of the community. The advancements in communication technology, including printing and publishing tools, various forms of electronic media, and internet which is supported by the Palapa communication satellite, increase the possibilities of better communication that can reach all areas of the Indonesian nation and also other countries. With the aid of modern communication tools, people can carry out social interaction at a distance, without having to come face to face with one another, and can even communicate with people they do not know (Albert H Trims, 2011: 89). Social contact which is supported by modern forms of technology has improved the channels of information from central government to outlying regions and vice versa, and even enabled more effective communication with the rest of the world in a relatively short space of time.

In primitive communities, communication between human beings is carried out using signs and symbols, such as sounds, movements and gestures, visual art, and folk performances (Sutopo, 2012: 108). In more developed communities, communication is carried out using the results of modern technology such as by email, mobile phone, television, fax, and SMS. All channels of communication in a community, whether traditional or modern, whether using art or not, are referred to as media (Linda Marshal, 1996: 48). However, due to the difference in sources, characteristics, and scope, we can distinguish between the traditional media, or the forms of communication media which continue to be used in traditional rural communities, and modern mass media such as newspapers, magazines, bulletins, television, and so on.

What we mean here by traditional media is forms of folklore, or stories which tell about the processes of the people, such as shadow puppet theatre (*wayang kulit*), comedy performances, *campur sari*, *ludruk*, and other forms of dance, and also traditional poetry such as folk songs, folk theatre, and musical instruments such as *kentongan*, *bedug*, and *gendang*. It is not surprising that folk performances are both a media of communication and also a media of entertainment which are used to educate Indonesian society in general but especially those communities living in rural areas. If we look at the background of Indonesian communities, the majority of which are characterized by rural attitudes and characteristics, we can understand why the media of traditional performances plays such a large role in educating the nation. By using the media of traditional performances, the space which is not filled by face to face communication between motivators or communicators of development or by opinion makers can to some extent be filled. Messages about increasing the intellectual capabilities of the nation, including areas such as education, health, local economy, and spiritual matters, if presented through media which are not unfamiliar, and using methods that are familiar to the community and suited to the local cultural values of the community, will be better received by the community, without the sense that information is being forced upon their rural communities.

In traditional communication in rural areas, the use of folk performances as a media of communication has great potential for reaching a large part of the community, in particular due to the fact that this kind of media has a strong attraction and is deeply rooted and living and thriving within the community (Dawam Raharjo, 2010: 86). This phenomenon appears to be in line with Rogers' opinion, after observing the rural communities in outlying regions of America, on "communication strategies for agricultural development," or in other words the potential of traditional media for achieving development goals, since this kind of media

has a potentially large audience and a high level of credibility in the eyes of the rural community.

If we look at the existing potential of the traditional media, we become increasingly convinced that this type of media can be used to educate its communities. The kinds of traditional media which can convey messages that will help educate the community are folk performances that include elements of speech, whether in the form of dialogue or song, such as performances of *ketoprak*, *ludruk*, comedy, *wayang*, drama, soap operas, and so on. The need for development which is suited to the various situations in recent times has attracted the attention of those working in the field of development planning and also development motivators, especially in developing countries such as the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, India, and Indonesia itself. Experiences in the diffusion of innovations in development in the fields of agriculture and health have shown that it is not only the messages to be conveyed that are important but also the choice of a suitable form of media with which to convey the messages at the right time for the target community.

When we talk about educating the Indonesian nation, we mean creating human resources which are capable of mastering the latest scientific and technological inventions, as well as developing mainstay products of excellence and high potential. This is in accordance with the vision of the Indonesian nation as stated in the National Long-Term Development Plan or *Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Panjang Nasional (RPJMN)*, in which the Indonesian nation is striving hard to create a society which has great potential, is superior, productive, and prosperous both physically and spiritually. There is no doubt that this is a highly appropriate endeavour. For this reason, it contains elements which are responsive to the situation, condition, and needs of the Indonesian nation, which are wise in relation to the correct choice of endeavour, and smart in relation to the level of understanding of the problems and the endeavour chosen to overcome existing problems. In other words, these endeavours are endeavours which are shrewd. In order to attain this level of shrewdness, it is necessary to carry out a continual socialization and bombardment of the mass media.

The media of traditional performances is a communication tool which has been used for a long time in certain places (and is of a local nature), before the culture in these places was affected by modern technology, and continues to be used today in these areas (Dawam Raharja, 2010: 198). In principle, traditional media have their origin in the community, and historically, their attraction is both functional and aesthetic, whether the performance is of a popular nature, such as *ketoprak* or *ludruk*, or of a more serious nature, such as *wayang orang* or *wayang kulit*. The goal of these performing arts is the same, namely to entertain but at the same time to educate the community and strengthen traditional values, or change traditional customs or habits which are no longer deemed appropriate. The power of the traditional media lies in the fact that it is community-oriented in the identification and expression of life in the community (HB Sutopo, 2004: 86). The messages which are conveyed through this type of media are intended to be part of a communal experience and a part of the lives of the people for whom the messages are meant, not to change their customs and values. The meaning or function of a traditional performance is not simply as entertainment but may also be part of a traditional ceremony or ritual with magical-religious value, or a reflection on the spiritual and physical life of a community, such as *ludruk* in East Java, *ketoprak* in Central Java, or *randai* in Riau.

The mass media play an important role as a tool for social change and reform in the community (Drajat Sukartono, 2012: 46). This type of media can also reach a wide area in a short space of time. Types of mass media include electronic media such as television,

internet, mobile phones and computer, and printed media such as newspapers, magazines, and bulletins. According to Wilbur Schramm and Rogers and Kincaid, the most suitable role of the mass media in the area of social change is as an agent of change. This role is to speed up the process of transition from a traditional society to a modern society. The opinion of Wilbur Schramm and Rogers is reinforced by McLuhan who asserts that it is technological innovation or change which has a greatest influence on development.

The mass media not only plays a role in creating and providing information but is also directed towards the goals of counseling and educating the community (Sutopo, 2008: 45). In development programs which require changes in attitude and motivation, there are strong benefits to be gained by using the mass media. It is important to realize the potential of the mass media in educating the nation and improving knowledge and skills in various fields, as well as primarily in altering the mental state or attitudes of the people. For this reason, it is necessary to think carefully about the choice of which media to use and the way in which they are used, in order that they can be used effectively and efficiently (F. Rachmadi, 1988: 113).

The results of a study on the use of communication media shows that people in rural areas throughout the world who use printed materials and electronic media will have more modern attitudes, be more progressive in their way of thought, and experience a more rapid transition to occupations that are more modern than their previous occupations (Manfred Oepen, 1988: 114).

In an endeavour to educate or improve the intellectual capability of the nation, in particular concerning efforts to increase and inspire a spirit of participation among the community in this endeavour to educate the nation, the traditional media plays a highly important role and function. Development will succeed if it is supported by a system of communication which is efficient and effective and makes best use of existing local potential, such as traditional media which have strong roots and continue to grow and thrive within the community.

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