Disaster aesthetic: disaster social space in disaster-themed mural

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Abstract. Messages in a mural are delivered through the processing of visual elements embedded with symbols, signs, codes, and meanings. The messages delivered in the mural comprise both verbal and visual. The existence of murals created the concept of social space which includes important issues such as the theme of disaster. When the mural is associated with disaster mitigation efforts, the mural is expected to bring a great influence on the awareness of citizens. The mural is also expected as a monument that can urge citizens to stay alert to potential disasters. The research methodology is a descriptive-explanative method with a qualitative approach. This research aims to analyze and explain the causal relationships in the production of social space through a mural with the theme of disaster. The results show that the existence of disaster-themed mural can be included in three dimensions of social space production according to Lefebvre, namely spatial space where the social activities of artists in making the mural on the walls of the city that originally serves mere as a barrier. Mural in the middle of the city is a representation of space because the discourse used in producing social space is a social problem that exists around the mural space was created so that the meaning contained in the mural is able to represent.

1 Introduction

Mural in relation to visual media is one of the street media that can easily be found in urban spaces. In general, the mural has a function as a medium to convey ideas or criticisms that artists made for policymakers. The mural, at the beginning of history, is depicted on the surface of the cave walls -- intended for a mean of expression, communication, and customary ceremonial purposes.

Susanto [1] provides a mural definition of a large painting created to support architectural space. Further explanation of this definition is that the mural cannot be separated from one of the aspects of the building, which is the wall. The wall is seen not only as a barrier of space or just an element that must be existed in the building but is also seen as a medium to accentuate the room.

Modern development of the newer mural is not only related to ceremonial or religious functions but also to social, political, and cultural dimensions. Physically, murals are used as a decoration for space and accent for government architecture. The works of the mural have to consider visual elements related to the content and the context of social environment in which the mural is located.

Messages in murals are delivered through processing visual elements that are loaded with symbols, signs, codes, and meanings. The messages embedded in the mural includes both verbal and visual. The verbal content in the mural is conveyed in the form of written

language, while the visual content consists of the shapes and colors presented in the mural [2].

Messages charged at the social dynamics, economic and political is always exciting to be published in order to get a good response in the form of commentary, criticism, approval, etc. It is expected that the message, which is processed visually, not only serves as information that is easily forgotten but also serves a deep meaning that is full of aesthetic communication and entertainment.

Mural art workers have a significant role in communicating the message to the community regarding various problems in society. Their role is manifested in the form of visualization of mural works featuring social advice and the delivery of people's aspirations through aesthetic visual media and full of moral messages.

The existence of a mural creates the concept of social space as presented by Henri Lefebvre [2]. According to him, space is formed by the spatial conception of man. The spatial conception gradually structurizes itself into a science of space. Space formed by humans through construction and discourse is called the social space. The production, in this case, is not the production of goods, but social production; either personally or collectively.

Actually, there is no completely ideal room since, in the modern capitalist society, spaces are the arena that will never be finished to be colonized. All interested parties will continue to dominate the use of a space and produce all the knowledge to maintain their hegemony over the utilization of the space.

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Piliang [4] states that moral messages or even criticism of the social reality embodied in the mural are in the symbolic nuances of art. The existence of murals in a number of public spaces reflects an attempt to resist the arrogance of power through the social space defined by Lefebvre.

An understanding of the social space in a mural can be attributed to the Lefebvre triadic concept as follows: a). The spatial room (*Spatial Space*). A spacial kit that refers to the material dimension of social activities and their interactions. Concretely, spatial space is a network of interactions and communication that arise in everyday life. b). Representation of *Space*.

The representation of space gives a picture or conceptualization so that something is defined as space. The representation of space is the realm of abstract space, arising at the level of discourse, appearing in a form that is spoken, for example, description, definition, and especially space theory. c). Space representation (*Representational Space*).

The representational space is the space that involves the symbolic dimension of space. The representational space does not refer to space itself, but to other things that give meaning to space. In the realm of social space production according to Lefebvre, space can include dimensions of *spatial space*, *representation of space*, or *representational space*. However, space may also comprise those three dimensions.

In addition to the political themes, important issues that can be included in the social space of a mural are the theme of disaster. Disaster is a serious disruption to the functioning of a society, causing widespread harm to human life as well as material, economic, or environmental aspects and exceeding the limits of society's ability to cope with their own resources (United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction-UN ISDR, 2004).

There are four phases of disaster management, namely: 1. Mitigation phase, which is an effort to minimize the negative impact of the disaster (e.g. building zoning and building codes, vulnerability analysis, public learner. 2) Preparedness phase is an effort to plan how to respond to the disaster (e.g. planning preparedness, emergency training, and warning system) 3. Response phase, which is an effort to minimize damage caused by disaster (e.g. CCTV, search and rescue, and emergency action) 4. Recovery phase is the effort to return the community to normal condition (e.g. temporary housing, financial aid, and healthcare).

When the mural is associated with disaster mitigation efforts, then the mural is expected to bring a great influence on the awareness of citizens. The mural is also expected as a monument that can persuade citizens to stay alert to potential disasters that may arise. In the midst of urban cultural flows and the density of urban society, the existence of a mural can be used to embellish the city as well as the documentation of disaster.

2 The material and method

The research methodology used in this research is a descriptive-explanative method with a qualitative approach [5]. This research aims to analyze and explain the causal relationships that occur in the production of social space through a mural with the theme of disaster. The type of data used in this study is the type of qualitative data in the form of narration from various information about the art of mural.

Sources of data are two, namely primary data sources and secondary data sources. Primary data sources include relevant information, facts, and realities. Secondary data sources are from printed media, books, and photographs related to mural art [6].

3 Results and discussion

The famous mural painting in a disaster-related world is *Guernica* or *Guernicay Luno* by Pablo Picasso. Picasso made this mural to commemorate the bombing of the German army during World War II in a small village with a majority of Spanish society. Whereas previously *Guernica* is the happiest city in the world, a city that is ideal and peaceful before the onset of World War II: women, cattle, soldier horses are scattered everywhere in the painting as shown in Fig. 1.

Fig. 1. Pablo Picasso's *Guernicay Luno* Mural

Picasso tried to portray his frustration with the condition of *Guernica* City after World War II with a mural in order to be seen by all the inhabitants of the city. The work was produced during the Spanish civil war raging in 1937

In general, the existence of disaster-themed mural can be included in the three dimensions of social space production according to Lefebvre, namely spatial space where the social activities of artists in making the mural on the walls of the city that originally serves mere as a barrier. Mural in the middle of the city is a representation of space because the discourse used in producing social space is a social problem that exists around the mural space was created so that the meaning contained in the mural is able to represent the circumstances in which the mural was created.

The pictures they create are critical images, containing the meanings and messages they want to convey to the wider community. Thus, indirectly, mural artists create a social space that is presented to the

general public. Disaster-themed social space can serve as a public art involving two-way communication. The mural art worker communicates visually to the community about what he wants to devote, while the community as a connoisseur in practice can, at any time, be able to direct the artist's interaction [7].

The social space in relation to the theme of disaster is closely linked to the use of symbols. Mural symbols arise in various contexts and are used for various purposes. In the actual symbol, there is a verb element which means mixing, comparing and making analogies between the sign and the object referred to [1]. Showing the symbols by choosing walls as mural mediums in the city becomes a very effective solution, as many people do not feel that the wall is a valuable thing.

Also in an increasingly narrow city, using existing building walls means not needing new space. At this level, the wall is no longer a separator but can be interpreted as an external and inner link between "me" and "them". The walls can be used as "paper" for the townspeople to carve out their own narrative.

For people who are experiencing a crisis in all areas, as well as an identity crisis, it takes a marker that he exists. Markers that do not immediately disappear within one or two days, but a marker of long standing in front of them, thus allowing them to reap a sense of pride in their selves, and that is the wall that became "paper" for citizens [8].

The social space of disaster in the mural finds its importance in the selection of the medium. Walls that are used as a means of disaster mitigation can provide insight to disaster-prone communities about the importance of vigilance in the face of future disasters. With the use of symbols, images, metaphors, and myths, the victims of disaster can be invited to explore the imagination, meaning, and function of a work of art. Search in that meaning will give rise to various forms of collective memory as well as higher awareness of disaster.

The disaster-themed mural according to Susanto [1] has a content and theme structure, but when it ceases to classify based on its content and theme, it is then the core structure of symbols, images, metaphors and myths about the disaster itself.

Structuring the symbols in a disaster-themed mural is a deliberately planned effort to convey concepts of disaster into illustrative, sensory and didactic terms. The mural artist must be able to compose the symbol well. If the arrangement of the symbol is not understood by the broad public, it will give a divergent interpretation.

In addition to symbols, visual imaging is also important to be presented as a means of sensing or perception, while also representing something that is "inside" (*inner*). Imagery can show something real, or represent something out of sight. Imagery can also serve as a "description" or metaphor, so the disaster image displayed on a mural can increase public awareness of the disaster. In the mural, through the image or picture, there is a message to be conveyed. So the public gets the picture after he sees the form of the mural and the image, which is derived from the image (mental level) artists are concretized in the form of artwork [9].

In addition to symbols and images, the metaphor is something that is attributed to objects, things or events. Then the term *metaphor* applies to all forms of transposition (displacement) terms. In metaphorical artwork other than as displacement/deviation, metaphor also serves as decorative purposes.

Displacement has not only uniting effects in the meaning of certain logic words but also find a new logic. In this case, the metaphor, as well as, the reference material of interpretation gives many assumptions. In artwork, metaphors are always associated with each work. Metaphors greatly assist artist to capture every phenomenon and conversation in art, in this case, its relation to context [10].

The use of metaphors in disaster-themed mural aims to make the message conveyed a creative element and strived to bring the imagination of the audience since the message is not directly delivered, but explicitly concealed through the similes (metaphors) as shown in Fig. 2.

Fig. 2. Mural Artist Painting Themed Work of Disaster

Myth can mean speech. Historically, myths follow and are closely related to rituals. The myth is a part of the ritual that is spoken or a story that is exhibited by ritual, but in a broader sense, myth means anonymous stories about the origin of the universe. If the artist declares the necessity of a myth, it's a sign that artists need to be united to the community. So the myth in art is more related to the language of disclosure and the language of the artist's intent. In the murals myth use, especially the popular ones, emphasize that the message can be conveyed easily by the audience. This myth is able to relate between perceptions with real experience of disaster.

Making the mural that gave rise to the social space of disaster can be started with a discussion with the victims ranging from sketching stage, continued in the process of the mural, as well as sustaining the communication even if the mural work has been finished.

Muratas [11] says that murals have presented different languages, fields, and media, which must be responded far beyond their daily habits. Physical and socio-cultural changes of urban and global society have taken place and continue in and through everybody's everyday life. The shift in socio-cultural, economic, political values has devastated a large number of traditionally tested values and has become the knot of

the strengths of every ordinary person to *survive* from time to time.

In delivering the message into the mural for easier public understanding, artists raise the issues that occur in society and generally indicate the situation or contextual work with the environment. Contextual efforts are through a discussion with some people around the area of the wall to be painted.

Discussion between the artist and the community is conducted in order to make the message can be understood by the public around the mural area. However, the community (public users) will always be dealing directly with the mural. The process of dialogue between artists and the public is a form of communication between artists and the public.

The dialogue process aims to know the desires, responses and how the public perceives what is happening in the areas of the mural. In the context of public mural art can be said as succeed if the process of creation has been through interaction, or artists do *research* in advance with the residents in the vicinity, which in the end, the public will feel involved and share the mural. Especially, if this associated with the location of the former disaster.

Because the mural as a work of art generally has a metaphorical element, the given *signs* are not always easy to understand by the general public. It means that the context of public art an artist must negotiate and build mutual understanding to the public users. Based on this case, the process of building a social space of disaster can be categorized as "good", because the artist voiced public interest and also his interest in order to express a win-win solution.

In connection with the message to be conveyed, in addition to the above dialogue process, artists, who work in the public space, have to conduct several stages in the creation process, for examples: messaging adjustments with buildings, streamlines that related to the comfort of traffic and the direction of the coming sunlight.

The architecture that is used as the drawing area is, for examples, a sturdy flyover pole like the letter T from the side of the overpass bridge that extends like a triangle, or an elongated square wall shape. This is because the artist is required to have technical skills, especially the problem of locating the place or simply have the ability to consider the selection of locations become an important part.

These considerations can be understood because the mural is not a matter of artist ability alone, but the mural also to be looked aesthetically and visually comfortable, and the message conveyed about its target, the effectiveness of the message, and the consideration of the location are the important parts.

After correspondence and by accommodating the location and all the elements in the "finding space" is combined with the wall, so that it becomes an integral unity in the form of a whole mural and eventually formed "new meaning" that exceeds the previous existence, then the mural can be said to succeed in terms of *content* and context.

Self-actualization expressed on the surface of public space walls automatically makes artists think about the public, but in this context, there are some mural painters who still use symbols that are less communicative. This causes the mural message is not easily understood by the community. In the context of the fine art of mural like this, even though his work is "good", but less communicative in its delivery [11].

It is the development of the pure idea of the artist's personal, in this case, there are no dialogues with the public of its users, so the mural is interpreted unilaterally by the artist. For the artist, the work may be interesting, but for the public, they cannot directly access its meaning.

Apart from the comments and opinions of the community, it can be identified that the main key to the success of the mural design is how artists negotiate with the public users. When the artist creates a mural and then involves public participation as a part of the *user*, the part that occupies the public space has to be negotiated, so that the mural will be able to reflect two interests at once, the artist's needs to express and the public needs to express his or her expression as well. The mural message will fail, if that it fails to bring those needs together when the artist creates his own ideas in the public space [12].

Artists or mural arts workers as a *creator*, certainly have a high creative soul, have a style that never separated from *the personal mission* and personal expression when working anywhere, but when mural work in the context of public art, artists cannot be "free" when painting for themselves. So, basically, the mural moves between two lines, namely communicative position and creative position. The overly communicative mural becomes less creative, while the overly creative mural results in a message that is difficult to be conveyed, which means artists' ability is at stake.

Mural as a form of visual communication plays a role in bringing messages from artists to the public (as a *transporter*). The message is delivered through symbols, images, colors, themes and text/writings. Mural as a visual message must be communicative, so the effectiveness of message delivery becomes the main purpose of artists. It is shown in the use of symbols/illustrations that have been familiar for the conventional community so that the mural message is more easily understood by the public.

In order to create a social space that is relevant to disaster, the mural must be unique. The uniqueness can be created through its form or resistance (game-themed mural) with the location where the mural is presented, from which the artist's creativity is at stake.

4 Conclusion

In communicating through the mural, artists are required to have an awareness that (its existence) to paint in the public spaces, it can *automatically* be considered public consumption, so that it needs knowledge of "public awareness", in examples: first, they have to understand

the message to be delivered, second; they must have the ability to interpret the tendencies and conditions both physically and mentally to the targeted community groups,

Third, they can choose a style of language that is considered appropriate to the message delivered and appropriate to be discussed effectively (clear, easy and memorable) to the public. Submission of the artist's message by building an image, using metaphors, or conventional symbols. These considerations are used to make the delivered messages more easily understood by the public that has a common understanding, ideology, and culture.

Message in a mural is composed of form and context in which ultimately determines the *content/content*, all three are interrelated. Artists paint based on ideas/experiences relating to the values of life, moral, loving, educational, environmental and social criticism expressed in the mural. The public who sees the form of the mural finally gets the *image* obtained from the artist's creations, from where the message relation begins to take place.

The picture that is created by the artist is able to reach the target, even if there is a failure of meaning and difference of interpretation about a picture that is not the same as intended by the artist, it is part of something common and understandable because murals presented to plural public, not to be debated, but it will enrich the discourse of the mural itself. Thus the real mural contains a message that at the same time stimulate the birth of various stories.

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