

*The Model of Intervening Cultural Space in the Hybrid Design
Case Study: The Combination of Japan-Indonesia Craft*

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Abstract

The development of craft in Indonesia has a huge economic potential due to the availability and diversity of materials as well as export opportunities. The craft design applied is a pattern of inherited forms of hereditary artisans. In order to compete in the global market, the crafts need design innovation. They are bamboo, wood, ceramics, batik and silver crafts. On the other hand, Japan also has a bamboo culture like Indonesia as it is commonly used in worship and daily operational life. Both in Indonesia and Japan, the bamboo culture represents the relationship between humans and nature. The study was conducted with some experiments of creating bamboo craft using the hybridity strategy. It combines the Japanese bamboo craft design with an Indonesian local design to make an innovation. The hybrid craft was created by combining the three groups of syntax and codes. The first syntax is a general pattern of Japanese bamboo woven and Indonesian craft design. The second syntax is a contextual design pattern of Beppu (bamboo craft center in Japan) and Yogyakarta (local handicraft centers of bamboo, wood, ceramics, batik, silver in Indonesia). The third group is the individual code generated from the individual concept of thought from the artists, designers and craft-men. The results is a model of hybrid craft that is syncretic (the cultural origin of constituent elements can still be distinguished) and hybrid (a new culture compound formed by the elements of different cultures combination, which cannot be referred to a certain culture). Ambiguity is the character of a hybrid design.

Keywords: hybrid, intervening, bamboo, craft, ambiguity

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Introduction

As the background of the study, we try to answer the three questions. The first question is why intervening culture space through design. At least there are four reasons. The first reason is because there is a phenomenon of globalization. Because of the advance of transportation, information and communication technologies, we live as if we were in one global village. It is easier to go from one place to another and experiencing other people's culture. It is also easy to interact with other people in different places using various social media on the internet. It causes the rapid changing of information. In the world of art and craft, there is a changing information in terms of material, technique, design strategy, production system and marketing strategy that creates dialogue among people from different culture spaces.

The second reason is caused by the high competition in the art market. The artist is always demanded by the market to bring in novelty in his works. There is a continuous demand for seeking difference and gaining novelty in the work of art. In the creative process of making the work of art, when the modern codes run out, the artist naturally searches for past codes from his own culture or other cultures he knew or experienced, creates a new interpretation of them and combines them with the modern codes; makes them relevant to his modern context and creates a contemporary work of art.

The third reason is there is a need to preserve the world cultural heritage as it forms our culture today in the shared cultural spaces, as part of our shared identity. We need to join the effort to protect our local culture to survive in the middle of global modern culture domination. The culture conservation is needed in the process of reinventing local identity. Identity is a value, therefore it is possible to represent it through design as design is not merely about product result, working process, bunch of techniques and even science or knowledge; Design is to design a design to produce a design. Design is about value.

As the last reason, the advance of information and communication technology enables individuals to be actively involved in constructing meaning. Meaning, including identity is no longer defined by the group of nations, state, institution, ethnic or other local communities. Every individual can share his or her own thinking or opinion, including his very own interpretation and appreciation of the culture and work of art. This is the era of intersubjectivity. This is the era of individual networking. People can communicate, interact and collaborate easily through the internet. There is a persuasive condition to collaborate interdisciplinary in creating the work of art among people from different cultural spaces.

The second question is why bamboo. It deals with the background of bamboo craftsman problems in Indonesia. Indonesia has a potency to develop the bamboo craft based on these four facts: first, the availability and diversity of raw materials are huge. Indonesia has about one hundred and forty species of bamboo to explore. Second, ninety five percent of Indonesia's forest products are non-timber, and most of the non-timber forest products are bamboo. Third, Indonesia's export market has 7 main commodities and bamboo is among the 5th forest product commodities. Forth, based on INBAR, the International Network on Bamboo and Rattan report, bamboo and rattan international trade in 2012 is 66% belongs to the People's Republic of

China, 11% owned by the European Union and only 9% belongs to Indonesia. But it is worth about 21,6 million dollars and it is still potential to be elevated considering the huge raw material supply and the fact that Indonesian bamboo craft has not appeared with its full capacity yet. Many things need to be improved. Let us investigate the bamboo craftsman problems in Indonesia.

We have tried to study the bamboo craft business in Rancabuaya, Jambe, Tangerang, Banten and a bamboo craft center in Brajan Village, Sleman, Yogyakarta. From those areas, we have tried to learn about bamboo craft development issues from materials, skills or techniques, designs, capital, transportation, communications, management, marketing and regeneration of craftsmen (Hidayat, 2015). There are major problems in terms of education, technology and marketing. In terms of education, the bamboo craftsmen do not have formal education in bamboo vocational skill, in the field of bamboo crafts. They apprenticed to senior craftsmen, without any system, depending on individual relations. In terms of technology, the shape and size of the bamboo stripes are not precise. Its surface is rough and often fibrous. There are no written quality standards and less equipment. In terms of marketing, they are relying on local collectors who collect bamboo crafts from the craftsmen village then sell them to the craft stores. They have no opportunity and capital to participate in national/international exhibitions without government or community agency interference. Studying the potency on one side and the problem on the other side, as a designer team, we think there is a chance to give a contribution from the design aspect through the improvement of the bamboo craft design, by combining material, techniques, culture codes and meaning from different bamboo cultural spaces, Indonesia and Japan.

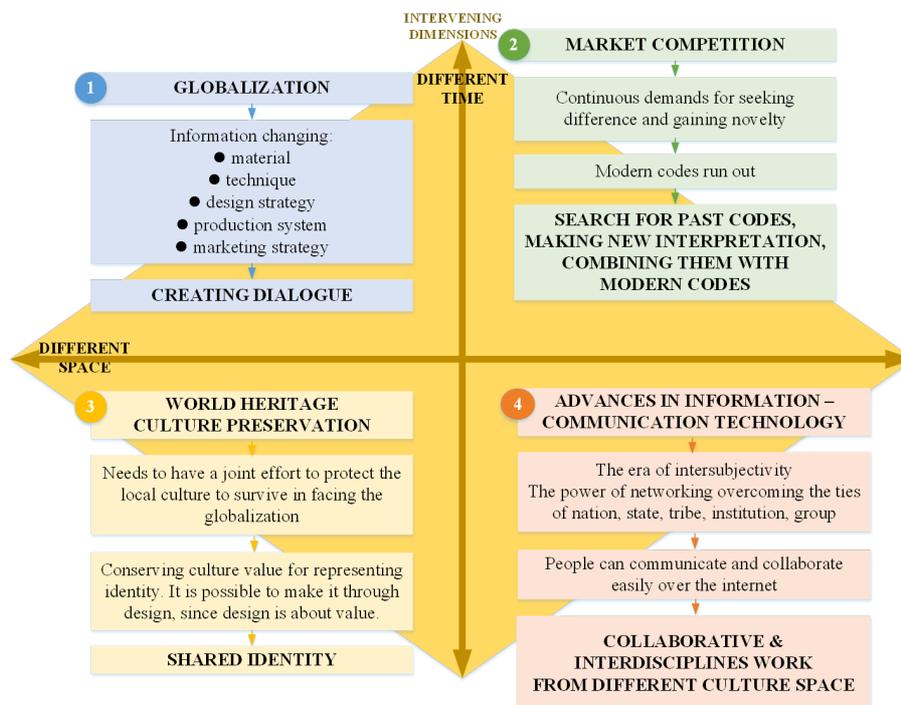


Figure 1: The Scheme of Background Issue of Design Problem
Picture Source: Hidayat, 2017

So, the next question is, why intervening Indonesia and Japan bamboo culture? Japan has an old bamboo culture like in Indonesia, that bamboo commonly used as daily goods in worship and daily operations, as the containers. Bamboo culture in Japan also has similarities with the bamboo culture in Indonesia in terms of being influenced by the value of equilibrium (in relation between man and nature). In Indonesia, it is generated from traditional Hindu-Buddhist beliefs, while in Japan, it is influenced by the Buddhism. Although it has an old cultural history of bamboo and is supported by the belief system, Indonesia is still left behind compared to Japan in terms of education, engineering, marketing and individual craftsman development. Hopefully, the combination of culture (including the design) will enable Indonesia to learn from the success of Japanese bamboo penetration in the international market.

Method

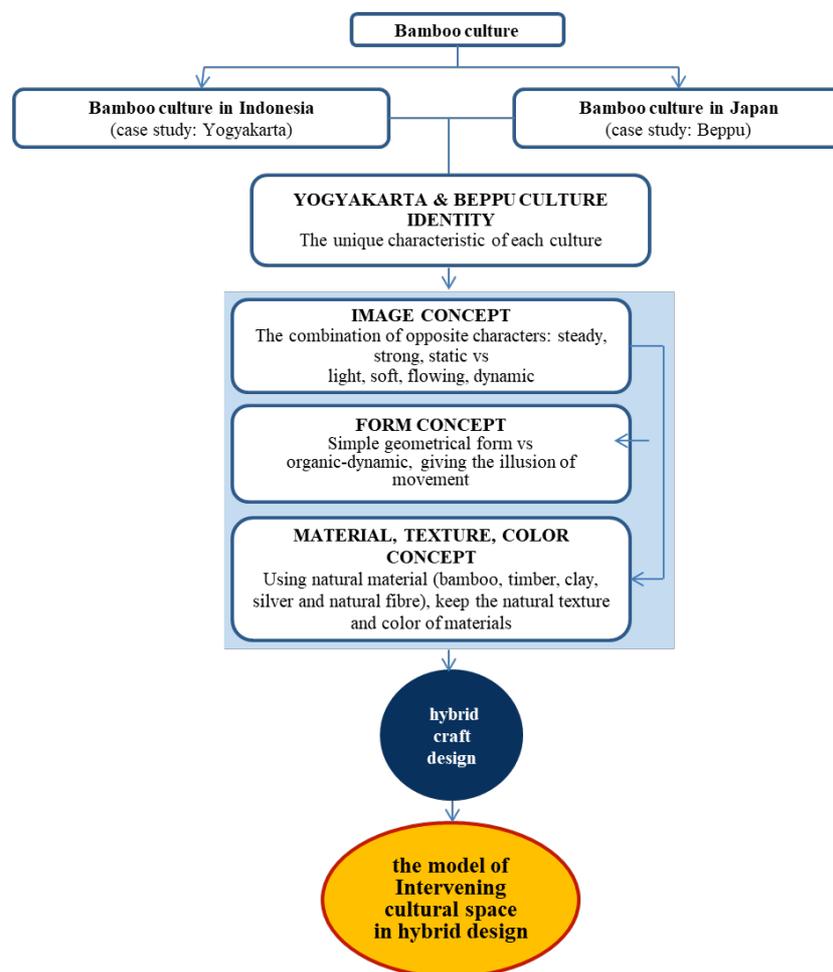


Figure 2: The Research Scheme
Picture Source: Hidayat, 2017

As the method, first we try to learn about the bamboo culture in Indonesia, represented by the bamboo culture of Yogyakarta and in Japan, represented by the bamboo culture of Beppu. In studying Japanese and Indonesian bamboo culture, we took a case study of Yogyakarta and Beppu culture. Yogyakarta is one of the top 5 bamboo handicraft centers in Indonesia besides West Java, Central Java, East Java and Bali, while Beppu is the center of bamboo handicrafts in Japan. We study the

unique characters of each culture that become each landmark. We name it an identity code. After gaining the identity concept of each culture, we generate it into the image concept and specify the image concept into form, material, color and texture concepts which as a whole will embody the image concept. The concept is followed by the sketch study of concept implementation and working drawings. The working drawings will be followed by the object making. From the various designs we made (we are now still in the level of design development), we try to generate the model of intervening cultural space in the hybrid design. Thus, the purpose of this study is to learn how to create a craft design using a hybridity approach that combines cultural spaces to generate novelty and identity representation.

Discussion

The Bamboo Culture in Indonesia (Case Study: The Bamboo Culture in Yogyakarta), Japan (Case Study: The Bamboo Culture in Beppu) and Their Shared Identity

Based on observations of bamboo handicraft center and bamboo communities in Brajan and Dlingo in Yogyakarta and Beppu in Oita, Kyushu, Japan (Beppu is the number one bamboo craft center in Japan), bamboo culture in Indonesia has similarities with Japan. The first equation of bamboo culture of both countries is in terms of bamboo becoming the part of daily life of both societies. Equipment from bamboo is used for ceremonial activities, household operations such as washing, cooking, eating, drinking, resting, playing and artistic activities, such as music art (Hidayat, 2016). The bamboo culture in Indonesia and Japan was originally a culture of bamboo basket (a product to store something or functional product). The second equation is in that both traditional cultures, the use of bamboo is influenced by the system of beliefs and worldviews, that is the syncretic beliefs of Animism, Hinduism and Buddhism in Indonesia and the syncretic beliefs of Shintoism and Buddhism in Japan. Hinduism and Buddhism teach that man is a part of nature, so that for his survival, man must create harmony or balance in relations with God, other people and nature. As a part of nature, human beings must respect, cultivate and maintain the nature. If the nature is destroyed, it will disturb human life. In both traditional cultures, human will pray to a bamboo tree when using it (Animism, Hinduism and Shintoism). Naturalism is the basic idea of their bamboo creation identity.

Naturalism is a belief or a basic idea that humans are part of nature, so as to maintain harmony with nature, they use nature as a reference of the truth of life value. This stream believes in the natural material as the healthiest material for the human body, because when humans were first created by God, human beings ate fresh natural material collected from nature and used objects made of natural materials. The life character of the followers of naturalism follows the character of nature, such as organic, flexible, open to difference and change. When naturalism became the basis of the concept of creation of bamboo craft and art, it inspired the concept of image, material, texture and color.

The Design Concept

The characters that represent the value of naturalism are natural, organic, flowing, continuous and complex. There is no uniformity or monotony in nature. Although the

nature's character is able to accommodate different characters, all are blended in a harmonious or balance composition. The concept of the form that represents the natural, organic, flowing and continuous characters is the organic form. It abstracts the movement of flowing water and bamboo rod when swaying in the wind. The abstraction creates a curving form that represents a dynamic movement. The concept of material, texture and color is the use of natural materials with natural texture and color. The combination of material used is material commonly used by the local craftsmen in Yogyakarta. They are clay (ceramic), wood, silver and batik. The batik used is made on natural fiber fabric with natural dyes from plant extracts and preservatives from natural minerals (alunite and kalinite), such as alum (Hidayat, 2013). The wood used is an easily carved wood and has a moderate durability, enough to be used in an interior environment, such as mahogany and sandalwood.

The design concept is combining the culture codes from Japan, in this case from Beppu, which is the traditional Japanese culture and from Indonesia, in this case from Yogyakarta, which is the traditional Javanese culture. The example of selected traditional Japanese culture codes is the God symbol or an abstraction form of Shinto gods. The example of traditional Javanese culture codes is the structural form of the Hindu temple and the forms generated from the puppets story and traditional Javanese ornaments. The image concept is the combination of opposite form characters. The characters of steady, strong, static (which are implied in the geometrical or structural form and stiff material) are presented together with the characters of light, soft, flowing, dynamic (which are implied through the use of organic form, soft and resilient material).

The Model of Intervening Cultural Space in Hybrid Design

The hybrid design is generated from the individual translations of artists towards general and contextual patterns. The hybrid design is produced from a combination of the three codes. The codes are the general cultural pattern, contextual cultural pattern and individual artist codes. The general pattern codes are the general bamboo webbing pattern in Indonesia and Japanese traditional culture, the local technique of processing bamboo, timber, clay, silver and batik fabric materials. The contextual pattern codes are the pattern of bamboo webbing developed in Beppu, the Batik pattern developed in Java and the silver ornament pattern developed in Kotagede, the center of silver craft in Yogyakarta. The individual code is the specific elements of identity carrier. It is an individual way of cultural interpretation and processing technique. The code belongs to the artist.

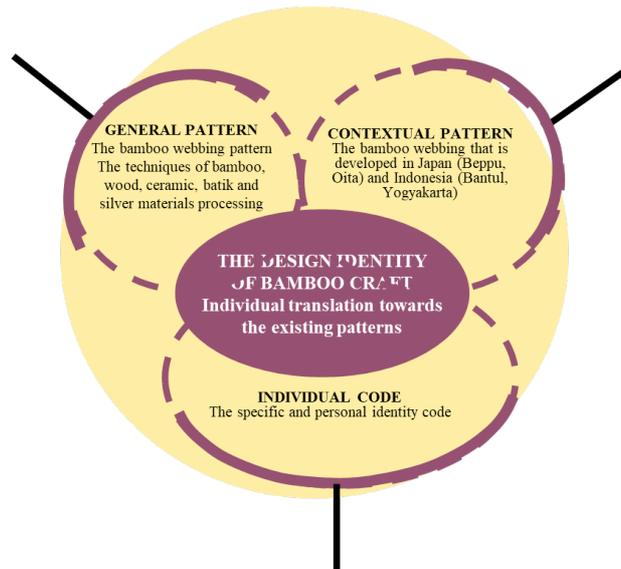


Figure 3: The Hybrid Design Scheme of Bamboo Craft
 Picture Source: Adapted from the Model of Hybrid Design (Hidayat, 2010),

Creating a hybrid craft involves the three groups of syntaxes or codes like the scheme above. The maker needs to collect data deals with (1) the general bamboo patterns in Indonesia and Japan, the general processing techniques of bamboo material (2) the more specific or contextual webbing patterns of Yogyakarta and Beppu and (3) the artist's individual translation of naturalism. The examples of general bamboo patterns are yotsume, yatsume, sanbontobi ajiro, mutsume, gozame and asanoha weaves, while the examples of more specific patterns are sashi yotsume, yatara, niju mutsume, mutsume kiku and tessan weaves (Shimazaki, 2015, p. 100-103). The contextual patterns tend to be more complex or intricate.



Figure 4: The General Codes: The Processing Techniques of Bamboo Material
 Picture Source: Minami, 2016



Figure 5: The Contextual Codes: The Webbing Patterns that Have Been Developed in Japan
 Picture Source: Shogoro, 1993

Conclusion

Finally, we come up with two points of conclusions. The first conclusion is about the model of hybrid design. The hybrid design is an intervening cultural space. The intervening space is constructed by 3 codes: general cultural pattern codes, contextual cultural pattern codes and individual artist codes. The operational way between design codes is individual translation. Individual translation is done by the artist. The artist has his own way in interpreting the selected general and contextual pattern. As an addition to the compound, the artist will also add his specific character that signed his work of art which represent his identity. At the end, the novelty of the work of art will come up naturally because of the existence of individual code and his way of translation. The second conclusion is a reflection about the meaning of the hybrid design. The hybrid design is the third space, that is the non-categorical area. It is the ambiguous space that has an identity of becoming. The hybrid design has the character of ambiguity as the object represents dual characters of different cultures. In this case study, the object does not belong to Japanese or Indonesian cultures. When the work of art is perceived by different readers in the exhibition, its meaning will be interpreted differently. It does not refer to a certain culture. Its identity will always be in the state of becoming, as its meaning is always in the state of being reinterpreted by different readers.

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