

The Role of Banyuwangi's Society in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through Organizational Cultural Reproduction toward a Green Economy

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Abstract

This article examines how Banyuwangi's society contributes to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through creative economy initiatives grounded in cultural reproduction and environmental awareness. Emerging from the trauma of the 1998–1999 witchcraft-related violence, Banyuwangi once carried the stigma of being the “City of Santet.” However, through a conscious process of memory politics and cultural revitalization, the local community transformed stigma into creative and productive identity. Cultural expressions such as the Gandrung Sewu festival, Jaran Goyang coffee, eco-friendly souvenirs, and academic initiatives like the SANTHET journal illustrate how local traditions are recontextualized into engines of economic growth and sustainability. Using historical and anthropological approaches, this study demonstrates that Banyuwangi's creative economy aligns with SDGs—especially decent work, sustainable cities, responsible consumption, and climate action—while providing a model for cultural resilience. The findings highlight that the creative economy is not merely an economic strategy but part of a broader politics of memory that links reconciliation, cultural continuity, and green development.

Keywords: Creative Economy, Sustainable Development, Cultural Reproduction, Memory Politics, Banyuwangi

I. Introduction

Banyuwangi, located at the easternmost tip of Java, represents one of the most dynamic regional transformations in post-Reformasi Indonesia. Historically stigmatized as the “City of Santet” due to the witchcraft-related violence that claimed more than 300 lives between 1998 and 1999 (Herriman, 2012; Magdalene, 2019), the region suffered deep collective trauma and an enduring stereotype. However, over the past two decades, Banyuwangi has undergone a cultural and economic renaissance. Through the spirit of **jenggirat tangi** (meaning 'rise again' in the Osing dialect), the community has shifted its identity from one

associated with fear and violence to a new image of resilience, creativity, and sustainability (ResearchGate, 2022).

This transformation coincides with Indonesia's broader commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations in 2015. In this context, Banyuwangi provides a unique case study of how local communities can harness cultural resources to drive sustainable development while reconciling with a violent past. Rather than discarding painful memories, Banyuwangi has reinterpreted them as cultural capital that fuels creative economy initiatives. Local products such as Jaran Goyang coffee, cultural festivals such as Gandrung Sewu, and intellectual outputs like the SANTHET journal exemplify how collective memory can be transformed into engines of economic growth, social reconciliation, and environmental awareness (Subekti & Kusairi, 2019).

The purpose of this article is threefold: (1) to trace the historical background of Banyuwangi's stigmatization and its cultural reconstruction, (2) to analyze the role of organizational cultural reproduction in translating local traditions into creative economy practices, and (3) to evaluate the contribution of these initiatives to the SDGs, particularly in the domains of decent work, sustainable cities, responsible consumption, and climate action (United Nations, 2015). This research argues that the creative economy in Banyuwangi is not simply an economic strategy but a memory politics that integrates cultural continuity, reconciliation, and green development. Methodologically, this article employs a historical approach combined with cultural anthropology and sociology of memory. Data are derived from archival records, government policies, cultural festivals, ethnographic observations, and secondary academic sources. This interdisciplinary framework allows for a holistic understanding of how local society leverages memory and culture to achieve sustainable development.

The creative economy has become a central paradigm in cultural and economic studies since John Howkins (2001) defined it as economic activities based on creativity, ideas, and intellectual property. Richard Florida (2002) further emphasized the role of the 'creative class' in fostering urban growth and competitiveness. In Indonesia, the creative economy has been institutionalized through national policies, particularly since the establishment of the Indonesian Creative Economy Agency (BEKRAF) in 2015, which positioned culture-driven industries as engines for inclusive growth (Indonesia Creative Economy Agency, 2019). Banyuwangi has been recognized as one of the leading regions to implement creative economy policies at the local level.

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a normative framework for situating Banyuwangi's creative economy in global development discourse. The SDGs emphasize the balance between economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability (United Nations, 2015). Specifically, SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 12

(Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDG 13 (Climate Action) align closely with the initiatives observed in Banyuwangi. The notion of a 'green economy' promoted by the OECD (2011) and UNDP (2015) underscores the integration of ecological sustainability with economic innovation.

Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) theory of cultural reproduction is central to understanding Banyuwangi's transformation. Cultural reproduction posits that social systems perpetuate themselves by reproducing cultural practices and symbols. Applied to Banyuwangi, this perspective explains how practices once associated with *santet* violence are recontextualized into productive cultural expressions. Maurice Halbwachs' (1992) theory of collective memory complements this analysis, highlighting how societies selectively remember and reinterpret the past according to present needs. In Banyuwangi, collective memory of *santet* has shifted from stigma to pride, a process Schwartz (1999) calls 'productive memory.'

The politics of memory, as theorized by Nora (1989) in his concept of **lieux de mémoire** (sites of memory), also informs this study. Festivals such as *Gandrung Sewu*, slogans like **Jenggirat Tangi**, and cultural products like *Jaran Goyang* coffee serve as symbolic sites where collective memory is negotiated and redefined (Nas, 2011). Stuart Hall's (1997) theory of cultural identity further reinforces this perspective by asserting that identity is not fixed but constantly formed through processes of representation, discourse, and power. Thus, Banyuwangi's creative economy can be understood as a form of memory politics that reshapes identity for sustainable development. In summary, this theoretical framework integrates four strands of scholarship: (1) creative economy and sustainable development, (2) cultural reproduction, (3) collective memory, and (4) politics of memory and identity. Together, these perspectives provide the analytical tools necessary to explain how Banyuwangi's society has transformed its violent past into a foundation for creative and sustainable growth.

II. Methodology

This study adopts a historical approach combined with cultural anthropology and memory studies in order to analyze the transformation of Banyuwangi's collective identity and its creative economy initiatives. The historical method is applied to trace the genealogy of violence, particularly the 1998–1999 *santet*-related killings, and to situate these events within the broader socio-political landscape of post-New Order Indonesia (Roosa, 2006; Ricklefs, 2008). Archival research included reports from *Komnas HAM*, local newspapers such as *Kompas*, and academic works on the Banyuwangi violence (Herriman, 2012; Kusairi, 2015). In addition to archival materials, ethnographic and anthropological perspectives were employed to understand how local traditions—such as *Gandrung* dance, *Seblang* ritual, and *slametan*—interact with Islamic practices and collective memory (Beatty, 1999; Anoegrajekti, 2012). Field observations during cultural festivals and

interviews with local community leaders, artists, and entrepreneurs further enrich the data. These primary sources are complemented by secondary sources, including scholarly articles on creative economy, sustainable development, and cultural reproduction (Howkins, 2001; Florida, 2002; UNCTAD, 2010). Methodologically, the study applies the lens of cultural reproduction (Bourdieu, 1977) to examine how Banyuwangi's society reorganizes cultural practices into new economic and symbolic forms. Theories of collective memory (Halbwachs, 1992; Connerton, 1989) and memory politics (Nora, 1989; Hall, 1997) are integrated to explain the symbolic transformation of santet from stigma to cultural asset. The interdisciplinary nature of this research allows for a comprehensive analysis of how trauma, memory, and identity intersect with creative economy and sustainable development.

III. Findings and Discussion

The findings are presented in four subsections: (1) historical context, (2) transformation from stigma to creative identity, (3) case studies of the creative economy, and (4) organizational and community roles in achieving SDGs.

Historical Context: From Blambangan to Reformasi

Banyuwangi's identity has been shaped by centuries of conflict and cultural negotiation. The region traces its roots to the Blambangan kingdom, which resisted Dutch expansion until its defeat in the Puputan Bayu of 1771–1772 (Lekkerkerker, 1916; Ricklefs, 2008). During the 20th century, Banyuwangi experienced political upheavals, including violence during the 1965 anti-communist purges (Roosa, 2006). The stigma of violence reemerged in 1998–1999 when accusations of witchcraft sparked mass killings. More than 300 people suspected of being dukun santet were murdered in vigilante actions amid the political vacuum following Suharto's fall (Herriman, 2012; Manan et al., 2001). This history of trauma created a lasting stereotype that framed Banyuwangi as the 'City of Santet' (Magdalene, 2019).

From Stigma to Creative Identity

Despite its violent past, Banyuwangi has redefined itself through the concept of *jenggirat tangi*, symbolizing resilience and cultural revival (ResearchGate, 2022). This transformation involved reinterpreting the santet stigma into cultural symbols embraced in art, tourism, and branding. For example, the provocative slogan 'Banyuwangi Kota Santet' was reframed to attract cultural curiosity while simultaneously challenging negative stereotypes (Atlantis Press, 2020). This illustrates what Schwartz (1999) calls 'productive memory,' where communities do not erase trauma but rework it into cultural identity and pride.

Case Studies of Creative Economy in Banyuwangi

Several initiatives demonstrate how Banyuwangi has turned memory politics into creative economy practices. The Gandrung Sewu festival, held annually on the Banyuwangi beach, gathers thousands of dancers performing the traditional Gandrung, once stigmatized as linked to magical beliefs. Today, it is celebrated as a UNESCO-recognized cultural performance that draws tourism and fosters intergenerational transmission of local culture (Anoegrajekti, 2012).

Another example is Jaran Goyang coffee, which deliberately uses the name of a feared santet spell to brand a popular local coffee product. By reappropriating the term, the product transforms a symbol of fear into one of creativity and hospitality, consumed across religious and cultural boundaries (Subekti & Kusairi, 2019). Similarly, the SANTHET journal reframes the discourse on witchcraft as an academic and cultural discussion, providing intellectual space for reflection and reconciliation. These cases highlight how memory and trauma can be rechanneled into products that support economic growth, social healing, and cultural pride. Eco-friendly souvenirs, batik Using, and handicrafts further illustrate the intersection of cultural reproduction and green economy. Many local entrepreneurs emphasize sustainability in production processes, aligning with SDG 12 on responsible consumption and production (UNCTAD, 2010). Such practices demonstrate that creative economy initiatives can integrate both cultural preservation and environmental consciousness.

Organizational and Community Roles

Banyuwangi's transformation is facilitated by organizational cultural reproduction involving government, communities, and private actors. The Banyuwangi Regency government actively promoted the brand 'Sunrise of Java' to shift perceptions and attract tourism (Radar Banyuwangi, 2021). At the grassroots level, the Using community, pesantren, youth organizations, and universities play crucial roles in sustaining cultural practices and linking them to entrepreneurship. UMKM initiatives receive support through local policies and festivals, demonstrating how organizational structures institutionalize cultural reproduction. These collective efforts ensure that cultural identity is not merely preserved but is continually reproduced in ways that align with contemporary economic and environmental goals (Bourdieu, 1977).

Creative Economy and the SDGs

The findings show that Banyuwangi's creative economy aligns directly with several SDGs. First, SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) is realized through the creation of new jobs in cultural industries and tourism. Second, SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) is supported by cultural festivals that promote inclusivity and resilience. Third, SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) is advanced through eco-friendly crafts and sustainable culinary practices. Finally, SDGs 13 to 15 (Climate Action, Life on Land, Life below Water) are indirectly promoted through eco-tourism and

conservation-linked cultural practices (United Nations, 2015; OECD, 2011). Banyuwangi thus serves as a model for how local societies can translate memory and culture into sustainable development strategies.

Challenges and Limitations

Despite its successes, Banyuwangi's creative economy faces several challenges. First, the commodification of culture risks reducing rich traditions to mere spectacles for tourism. While festivals attract economic benefits, there is an ongoing tension between authenticity and market demands (Florida, 2002). Second, inequalities in access to resources and markets mean that not all community members benefit equally from the creative economy. UMKM entrepreneurs often struggle with capital, distribution, and digital literacy, which may limit inclusive growth (UNCTAD, 2010). Third, the expansion of tourism and industrial projects in Banyuwangi can create environmental pressures, including deforestation, waste management problems, and conflicts over land use (Hervina & Riztika, 2024). While eco-tourism initiatives aim to mitigate these risks, balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability remains an ongoing challenge. Fourth, the politics of memory carries risks of manipulation; symbols of reconciliation can be appropriated for electoral purposes or commercial gain, potentially undermining genuine community healing (Schwartz, 1999). Finally, this study acknowledges its own limitations. While it integrates historical and anthropological perspectives, it relies heavily on secondary sources and selective case studies. Further ethnographic research is needed to capture the everyday lived experiences of Banyuwangi residents engaged in creative economy practices. Future studies could also employ quantitative methods to measure the economic and environmental impacts of creative initiatives.

IV. Conclusion

Banyuwangi's transformation from the stigmatized 'City of Santet' into a model of creative economy and sustainable development reflects the power of cultural reproduction and memory politics. By embracing the spirit of **jenggirat tangi**, the community has demonstrated resilience and agency in reshaping its identity. Cultural practices once associated with fear and violence have been reinterpreted as engines of economic innovation, social reconciliation, and ecological awareness. Festivals such as Gandrung Sewu, products such as Jaran Goyang coffee, and intellectual initiatives like the SANTHET journal illustrate how trauma can be transformed into productive memory that fuels inclusive development.

This study shows that Banyuwangi's creative economy aligns closely with several SDGs, particularly SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDGs 13–15 (Climate Action, Life on Land, Life below Water). Through organizational cultural

reproduction involving government, civil society, and the private sector, Banyuwangi has institutionalized cultural resilience into its development strategies. While challenges remain—such as commodification of culture, inequalities of access, environmental pressures, and the risks of politicized memory—the overall trajectory demonstrates how local societies can mobilize their cultural heritage as sustainable assets for the future. In conclusion, Banyuwangi provides a compelling case study for scholars and policymakers interested in the intersections of culture, memory, and sustainable development. It demonstrates that creative economy is not merely an economic strategy but a form of cultural politics that integrates reconciliation, identity, and ecological responsibility. The lessons from Banyuwangi suggest that other regions with traumatic pasts can also leverage memory and tradition as drivers of sustainable growth. Future research should expand empirical analysis with quantitative methods and broader ethnographic work to measure long-term impacts. Nonetheless, Banyuwangi stands as evidence that societies can rise from trauma and build inclusive futures through creative and green pathways.

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