culture 21
UCLG Committee

GOOD PRACTICE 2022
BANDUNG
HUTAN MENYALA
(GLOWING FOREST)

5th edition
UCLG – MEXICO CITY – CULTURE 21
INTERNATIONAL AWARD

HUTAN MENYALA (GLOWING FOREST)

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COVID, NATURE, ENVIRONMENT, WELL–BEING, CREATIVE INDUSTRIES, TOURISM, TECHNOLOGY, SECURITY, ATTRACTIVENESS, INNOVATION

1. Bandung and culture

Bandung, the capital city of West Java Province, was officiated as a city in 1810, conveniently placed nearby Jakarta, Indonesia Capital City (180 km). Surrounded by mountains and plantations of tea, coffee and quinine, located at 700 meter above sea level, Bandung gained a reputation as a destination for leisure. The place has been renowned for its hospitality industry since the colonial era. As commonly occur in growing, dense urban areas, Bandung faces the challenges of disparity and degradation of environmental qualities.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as a recovery program, the West Java Governor, in collaboration with The Lodge, the community of creative talents and content creators Sembilan Matahari, Djuanda Forest Park, West Java Bank, local inhabitants and authorities, aimed to activate the city forest with "Hutan Menyala" (HM) or "Glowing Forest", as a post-pandemic destination, while also educating the citizens about the relationship between the city and the forest (as water retainer, clean air provider, etc.) in an entertaining way.

HM provides an opportunity for creative actors to create narratives, visuals and audio; activating a part of the forest with an attraction that offers an immersive experience. This project, which is coherent with the development of Bandung as a UNESCO Creative City of Design since 2015, gave the chance for these young citizens to practice their creative skills (animation, design, visual art, music, ambience & performing art, lighting, programming, etc.) and gain income. Visitors feel more secure in taking part in HM tour, since it is conducted in an open space, with safe physical distancing. Conclusively, HM provides a model of a post-pandemic destination.

HUTAN MENYALA INTENDS TO ATTRACT VISITORS TO THE CITY FOREST FOR A NEW EXPERIENCE THAT BLENDS NATURE AND ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY.

2. Project goals and implementation

2.1. Main goal and specific objectives

HM aims to provide a model for post-pandemic destination that fulfils the whole safety and health protocol while still maintaining the visitors' expectation of entertainment and relaxation. It also aims to convey the message about ecological ecosystem, especially the interdependency between a forest and a dense urban area like Bandung, through audiovisual and tactile experience, using digital mapping and immersive technology.

Another goal is to provide employments by training and hiring local youth to become "Forest Friends", hosts who guide visitors from one post to another along the narrated path in the forest. More opportunities for income are gained from the merchandise and F&B booths, run by local businesses.

HM also aims to have a positive environmental impact. Collaborating with the West Java Provincial Forestry Service, HM allocates a percentage of the entry ticket sales to the planting of tree seeds across the West Java region.

2.2. Project development

Hutan Menyala, a result of the collaboration among West Java Government, BJB, Djuanda Forest, The Lodge, and Sembilan Matahari, created a new experience for people to interact with the urban ecosystem, using advanced technology with local & traditional context & narratives, for audience from all ages and background.

HM is a prototype of a post-pandemic destination in an open space, with health protocol (keeping distance among people, etc.), but entertaining and providing new experiences by using digital technology, presenting narratives with local contexts. HM was developed further by the involvement of Bandung Creative City Forum, Telkomsel (a state-owned telecommunication company) and The Ministry of State-Owned Enterprises.

The project has faced challenging situations since the beginning. As a mitigation, and for the sustainability and development of the project, HM installation is relocated to The Lodge, a company's property, with the purpose to secure the administrative issues. Sembilan Matahari welcomed the invitations from city forests all over Indonesia to create similar activations in their respective places, exploring each their contexts and characteristics; established "Menyala Foundation" to handle hundreds of interns in similar projects; connected with wider communities such as "Springwater Guardians" who handles the planting programs, especially for the supply of priority sapling and protective plants for critical areas.

THE HUTAN MENYALA PROJECT REQUIRED YOUNG TALENTS AND CONTENT CREATORS OF BANDUNG, GIVING THEM WORKS AND INCOME DURING THE PANDEMIC. HM IS COHERENT WITH SOCIAL-ECONOMIC RECOVERY INCLUDED IN THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN OF THE CITY.

3. Impacts

3.1. Direct impacts

The local government gave the permission of this forest park activation, therefore providing adequate supports, such as impact analysis on the natural habitat, management of traffic/mobility to/from the forest, and facilitation of planting seeds and saplings bought from the ticket sales profit.

Local people, especially youth, gained income by being Forest Friends (hosts/guides) and fulfilling other related jobs at the venue, and by producing/selling merchandise and F&B. HM managed to employ 100 local youth, gained 10,000 visitors, and planted 20,000 trees in surrounding villages.

LOCAL CULTURAL ACTORS HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS THEIR TALENT THROUGH THE PRODUCTION OF NARRATIVES, VISUALS, AUDIO, AND ALL CREATIVE INTERVENTION IN THE PROJECT; SUPPORTED BY THOSE IN THE FIELD OF CREATIVE DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY.

3.2. Assessment

HM project was initiated by the provincial government, collaborating with private sector and local communities, as an effort for social and economy recovery at Djuanda City Forest. The mandatory restriction of mobility and interaction during the pandemic significantly reduced the numbers of visitors, therefore reducing as well the revenue to maintain the city forest and its facilities. The project has relocated to another site with more independence in determining its operational hours and regulations, to ensure its sustainability.

3.3. Key factors

HM refers to the aspects of Design Thinking as its success keys: Desirability, Feasibility and Viability.

Desirability: Particularly during and post-pandemic, people were tired of being restrained in limited indoor spaces and were longing for open-air activities with safe interaction. They inclined to "outdoor healing" with a new experience such as offered by HM.

Feasibility: due to the abundant availability of skilful (creative) talents in technology and digital creators in Bandung. Their services are relatively affordable, making it possible to produce prototypes and new works.

Viability: HM attracted big brands who need innovation to activate their identities, especially during- and post-pandemic, providing the opportunity to synergise.

3.4. Continuity

The West Java Province has encouraged a state-owned bank, BJB, to sponsor HM. Moreover, the Office for Forestry of West Java Province has committed to provide seeds and saplings in exchange for a percentage of the ticket sale profit. Moreover, HM is planned to be implemented in other (city) forests, and has become a working model of synergies among the hexa helix stakeholders.

4. Further information

Bandung was a candidate for the fifth "UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21" International Award (February – June 2022). The jury for the award drew up its final report in September 2022, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

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