

Revitalization of Government Communication to Resolve Ambiguity of City Identity

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Abstract

Research is reviewing the effect of communication government in determining the regional identity of Malang City. The succession of government principal in Malang City may influence the output of policy making. Such phenomenon can result into what so called “ambiguity of identity” that Malang City must experience, which in turn it may impact adversely on the establishment of the identity for Malang City itself. Research method is qualitative descriptive. Data are collected with deep interview. This research describes the change of Malang City identity in every leadership succession. Result of research finds a less consistency from the government of Malang City in securing the identity for Malang City. Indeed, the government of Malang City is less consistent in securing and developing city identity because it always changes with the succession of mayor leadership. Policy communication done by new government tends to be less sustainable in every term period. Policy communication done by the government of Malang City in securing city identity is usually top-down without involving the participation all stakeholders either board of representatives, relevant officials, and communities.

Keywords: Revitalization, Communication, Ambiguity and Identity

1. Introduction

Place identity is the important issue that must be considered in planning and engineering the city. It aligns with global move that attempts to protect places with significant cultural legacies. Place identity concept represents a relation between place and identity. It talks about the meaning and significance of “certain place” for the occupant and the user. This concept is an important concept that covers various sciences such as geography, urban planning, urban design, architecture landscape, and others. Fundamentally, place identity concept explains about how our local environment (including its geographical location, cultural tradition, cultural legacy, and others that belong to local wisdom) influences our life (Fisher, 2006). Identity of a certain place, if this identity is developed and maintained well, can allow us to control our life because we may feel comfort and secured in our life environment.

Place identity concept seems related with a concept of City Branding. This latter concept represents a manifestation of branding from a certain city. Branding itself is defined as a process by which company or organization tries to differentiate their product offered to their target from competitor’s product (Dinnie, 2009). In this case, City Branding is then considered as a process or effort to establish a brand from a certain city (City Brand) in order to produce a convenient place in the heart and mind of stakeholders/targets (investors, tourists, talents, etc) of the city.

City Branding is done through several ways and among other is by creating many attributes (positioning, statement, slogan, logo, and icon determination). Beside tangible attributes, City Branding is done by organizing marketing communication activities (such as event, exhibition, advertising, and other usages of mass media). In short, these activities are considered as the marketing of city branding which represents a process to achieve various goals stated by the city (Anholt, 2007).

City Branding is the assignment for stakeholders and also their collaboration on behalf of city wellbeing. The responsibility of successful city branding remains in all internal public members of the city, including city government, private, entrepreneur, interest group, and communities of the city. The priority of city branding is given upon how to make all city potentials being functional to deliver the expected value.

City Branding Concept must be straightly consistent to the developmental aspects of the city. Being a part of development program, thus the government must communicate to the communities the benefit or utility of every developmental step made in the region. In disseminating developmental messages, the government must have credibility, good appeal, supportive expectation or strong feeling that may persuade communities to follow government plan for development.

Communication in essence is a process of message delivery from communicator to communicant (Effendy, 2003). According to Lasswell, communication is “Who say what in which channel, to whom, with what effect “.

Communication is not merely done by one or two individuals, but it involves a group or organization to conduct a communication. Mulyana (2007) asserts that communication can be assigned into several types based on the level or number of participants in communication, respectively intra-personal communication, inter-personal communication, group communication, public communication, organizational communication, and mass communication. Review on communication since in the latest days has crossed various science disciplines. Now, there are reviews on politic communication, organization communication, development communication, sociology communication, psychology communication, and others.

Government communication means a delivery of the idea, program, and concept by the government to the communities in order to achieve national goal (Hasan, 2010). Moreover, Hasbiansyah (2011) says that government communication represents one important aspect for the execution of national activities because government communication is a method to deliver information across organization. Such communication is also relevant to the organization which its membership line shall involve the communication between superior and subordinate.

In local autonomy era, Suratmi & Santoso (2013) indicates that the governing of local government has wide aspects involving local governance system, organizational structure, work mechanism (system procedure), legislation, local government officers, structures-infrastructures, and also budget. All these aspects are influential to the effectiveness of local government performance.

City Branding Concept explained so far is the government domain where the government has a right to decide the brand. However, this right is not functionally well in several places, including Malang City. The City has been 100 years old since 1 April but it does not have certain identity due to various versions emerging.

There has been a concept of Tri Bina Cita which is settled on one plenary session of Sidang Paripurna Gotong Royong Kotapraja Malang in 1962. This concept contains several themes such as:

1. City of Student / City of Education.
2. City of Industry.
3. City of Tourism.

However, over time, there are new concepts raised by the local government of Malang City such as Malang Kota Bungan (Makobu) and Malang Ijo Royo-Royo. Such ambiguity of regional identity concepts from the local government is becoming an indicator that there is an ambiguity in securing the branding for Malang City.

Therefore, the author attempts to conduct a further examination using the review lens onto government communication, especially to understand the hesitancy of the local government of Malang City in securing regional identity. The author expects to obtain such understanding through a title "Revitalization of Government Communication to Resolve Ambiguity of City Identity".

2. Literature Reviews

In executing the development, the government needs communication to deliver government concept to the communities. The ability to deliver government idea will need the expertise in communication. Communication done by government officers not only contains verbal messages, but also strategies that can be presented through activities.

Some concepts are used in this research such as development communication, government communication, branding and city branding. All concepts in the section of literature reviews will be used by the author as analytical instrument.

2.1. Development Communication

Tahoba (2011) in the Proceeding of National Seminar on Small Islands Development has reported that "one approach to growth community participation is through development communication".

Effendy (2006) declares that "development communication is a message delivery process by individual or group of individuals to others in order to change others' attitude, opinion and behavior to improve physical progress and mental satisfaction".

Communication plays important role in development because one of 12 roles of communication in development, as noted by Hedebero and Nasution (1992), is "that communication will facilitate the planning and implementation of development programs relevant to population needs". Rogers (1976) and Sitompul (2002) add that communication is the prolongation of the hands of the government planner, and main function of communication is to enlist support and participation of the communities to ensure that development plans are implemented. Communication and development are two issues that are interdependent to each other. The position of communication in development context is described by Berger 1987 "as an integral part of development" because communication act as a set of instrumental variables in bringing about development.

Pursuant to Berger 1987 explanation, the author presumes that communication cannot be separated from development because communication represents a set of instrumental variables helpful for achieving the development. The goal of development communication must be to advance toward development. Nasution (1992) implies that "the goal of development communication is to internalize concepts and mental postures, and also to teach skills needed by a developing country". In order to ensure that development communication is more successful in attaining the targets, while also avoiding from the possibilities of unexpected effect, then the actor of development communication must attend the following principles of development communication as suggested by Roger and Adhikarya:

- 1) Specially-designed messages (tailored messages) for specific communicants.

- 2) Ceiling-effect approach, precisely by communicating the messages to the opponent groups.
- 3) Narrow-casting approach, precisely by localizing the messages on the favor of communicant interest.
- 4) Utilizing traditional communication channel.
- 5) Making acquaintance with opini leaders in the disadvantaged communities, and asking for their favor to communicate development messages.
- 6) Activating the participation of change-agents from immediate communities to be functioned as the officer of development agency.
- 7) Creating and fostering methods or mechanisms of participation for communities because communities are supposed to be the actors of development starting from planning to evaluation.

3. Research Method

Research uses qualitative methodology. Qualitative research is research aimed to explain phenomena through data collection (Kriyantono, 2007). Reason behind the author's decision to choose qualitative research is because the author insists on developing a deep understanding of how is communication done by the government of Malang City to secure its regional identity.

Moreover, qualitative research is a research that uses qualitative methodology to investigate social phenomena and human problems. By this approach, a researcher can produce a complex description, examine words, prepare detail report based on respondent perspective, and conduct a study on the natural situation (Creswell, 1998).

Interview is performed with respondents at The Official of Culture and Tourism for Malang City, and the Agency of Local Development Planning (Bappeda). These two offices are selected because both are government representatives with important role in securing regional identity of Malang City. Because research is located in Malang City, some experts, including marketing and tourism experts, will be engaged.

4. Result And Discussion

As shown by the news in Lawangpost.com, the region of Malang City has been more than one century (Abidin, 2013)[20]. One plenary session of Sidang Paripurna Gotong Royong Kotapraja Malang in 1962 has contended that Malang City is planned to be:

- 1) City of Student / City of Education.
- 2) City of Industry.
- 3) City of Tourism.

It is expected that all these three concepts will become the aspiration of communities in Malang City. Therefore, the concepts are fostered and integrated into a grand concept called as TRI BINA CITA KOTA MALANG

4.1. Malang City as City of Education,

Local potentials of Malang City provide the City with good sale price and competitiveness rate at regional and national levels. In the globalization era, education world shall be challenged by communities who demand for good and qualified education facilities. The follow-up includes creating vision and mission for the education in Malang City, and developing partnership with college for the interests of review, the development of science and technology, and the improvement of human resource quality in Malang City.

Malang City has been loaded with many schools, campus, colleges, non-formal education institutions or informal courses, as well as Moslem dorm schools. The supporting facilities are quite reliable such as dorm houses, book stores, super market, plaza, community health centers, and others. One supporting facility that plays significant role is the presence of public transportation throughout city region (25 routes) that connects 3 (three) bus stations in Malang City, respectively Arjosari Bus Station (for Surabaya departure), Gadang Bus Station (for Blitar departure), and Landungsari Bus Station (for Jombang departure). The prolongation of economic crisis has given very huge economic impact on the people of Malang City. It raises unemployment rate and decreases economic growth rate. Only by keeping the faith strong with pray to God for blessing, the prolonged crisis is gradually resolved. Measures taken to deal with the crisis are by opening wide opportunities for employment and business, and by producing workforces with high quality and strong competitiveness at work market.

4.2. Malang City as City of Industry

In long ago, Malang City is known for cigarette industry. Small and medium industries have diversified their product after starting to recover from economic crisis but these industries still need guidance in terms of quality improvement, technical matter and capital investment. It is a crucial step to accelerate the recovery of economic development based on people economic which in turn prepares the step stone for better future development. Heavy industry in Malang City still needs a specific instrument to promote their existence into the communities, and it is expected that it empowers the productivity of Malang City as City of Industry.

4.3. Malang City as City of Tourism

Malang City is also recognized for its natural scenery, cool weather, and shaded and convenient environment. Attractive appeal of Malang City is also shown by the antiquity of the former Holland buildings. All elements above are attractive enough to convince domestic and foreign tourists to come to Malang City. Several places for shopping, either for traditional or modern items, are spread out throughout city spots and it supports Malang City to stand as City of Tourism. The development of modern shopping centers along with the construction of housings has been dramatic and may reduce the landscape into nothing land left in Malang City. In local autonomy era and globalization age, the development in any fields is the beginning step to improve the image, position and role of Malang City in the connection between Cities, Provinces, and Nations. Development also reflects the opportunity and expectation to provide benefits for Malang City communities.

4.4. Identity of Malang City as Representation of Mayor Idealism

The identity of a certain place, if it is developed and maintained well, may allow us to control our life because we feel comfort and secured in our life environment. The concept of environmental comfort is then called as Place Identity. Indeed, Place Identity talks about how our local environment (including its geographical location, cultural tradition, cultural legacy, and others that belong to local wisdom) influences our life (Fisher, 2006).

Identity of a certain place is associated with City Branding concept. This concept is a branding manifestation of a certain city. Branding itself is a process by which company or organization attempts to distinguish their product offered to their target from competitor's product (Dinnie, 2009)[2]. City Branding is also a process or effort to establish a brand from a certain city (City Brand) in order to produce a convenient place in heart and mind of stakeholders/targets (investors, tourists, talents, etc) of the city.

It is the duty of the government of relevant city/regency to translate City Branding concept into the branding manifestation of a city. However, this concept is not yet utilized properly by several regions, including Malang City. It seems that city identity is not far different from what is expected or minded by the Mayor.

In period 2013-2018, the identity of Malang City is not far away from the vision or mission of Malang Mayor. There is a straight line from this identity to the idea of Mayor, and it is confirmed by the Head of Division of Data Recording and Evaluation in the Agency of Local Development Planning (Bappeda), Mr. M Sulton.

As stated by him, the identity of Malang City is the product of government vision-mission when Mr. M. Anton is inaugurated as Malang Mayor in September 2013. Every successive local head has a distinctive vision-mission, and this vision-mission is poured into RPMJD for 5-year term. This local planning contains various programs for the next 5 years term that have been promised since election campaign.

The role of Malang Mayor is quite significant in determining the identity of Malang City because Bappeda as the relevant SKPD to handle local development planning is only "the extension of the hands" of Mayor's idealism. As M. Sulton explained to the research team, Bappeda is the extension of mayor's hands in the development, especially when this agency must prepare RPMJD and RENSTRA, and make a communication with relevant agencies about what must be achieved in next 5 years.

If a certain jargon or identity in Malang City must change, Mr. Sulton declares that it begins with mayor idealism. It is said so because the change shall reflects vision-mission of mayor during election campaign. The policies of old or new mayors on their vision-mission have been cast into certain mold and even polished within Internal Affair Minister's Decree but the realization depends on priority policy made by the elected mayor.

4.5. Top-Down Communication from The Government of Malang City in Securing City Identity

Government communication is very important in executing national activities because it is a method to deliver information across organization, especially for the organization which its membership line involves the communication between superior and subordinate. The government does a communication to convey ideas, programs and concepts from government to communities in order to achieve national goals. Good communication pattern is two-way communication. It means that both government and communities of Malang City are giving to each other their inputs about ideas, programs and concepts for development. It will produce a collective interest within these ideas, programs and concepts.

By understanding such two-way communication pattern, then both government and communities of Malang City will recognize the identity of Malang City. Recognizing this identity may facilitate them to understand who needs what, how many, and how to meet the needs, and also urge them to keep this identity sustainable. In relation with city identity, every aspect in the city plays its own role. Therefore, two-way communication pattern is very appropriate to be used by government.

However, the existing communication is one-way or top-down. In the author's term, top-down communication is a communication from the upper structure about anything to be done by the lower structure. The identity of Malang City is the product of mayor idealism.

As explained before, the identity of Malang City, that is "Malang Bermartabat", is not different from vision and mission suggested by Malang Mayor, Mr. M Anton, in period 2013-2018. Bappeda as the planner of local development is only the extension of mayor's hands. Communication process within internal environment of the government of Malang City in securing the identity, as said by Mr. M Sulton, shall comply with the regulation.

Such matter above has been regulated in legislation. For instance, Civil Servant is regulated by legislation. Bappeda must work on the duty depending on legislation and Internal Affair Minister's Decree. Every leader must have similar broad lines about the relationship of communication across institutions.

The trend toward one-way communication has been highlighted by the Board of Local Representatives for Malang City. Mr. Slamet, the Head of Gerindra Party Fraction for Malang City, has explained that communication relationship across institutions in securing and applying city identity must be kept sustainable. He adds that two-way relationship across institutions may integrate different discourses of vision-mission. He takes an example from the construction plan of Islamic Center. There is opponent against this construction who says that rather than spending the budget for this construction, the monies shall be focused on optimizing UKM centers or local development in Malang City. Different opinion shall not happen if communication across institutions is fluent and arranged in two-way channel, especially when it comes to policy-making and policy implementation.

4.6. Reviewing the Identity of Malang City in Period 2013-2018

Mr. Moch Anton, Malang Mayor, has raised a vision "*Malang Bermartabat*" by carrying a slogan *peduli wong cilik*. As shown in vision and mission of Malang City, *Bermartabat* is abbreviation of *BERSih, Makmur, Adil, Religius-toleran, Terkemuka, Aman, Berbudaya, Asri, dan Terdidik*.

It is quite clear that clean Malang City is the expectation of all Malang City citizens. City environment that is clean (*bersih*) from garbage and waste is the condition expected in Malang City development during the leadership of Mr. Moch. Anton. Clean is also the characteristic of governance. Indeed, clean governance must be created to keep community interest served properly. Prosperity (*makmur*) is the aspiration entrusted to the government that must be realized through several authorities had by the government.

The communities of Malang City must be treated in manner of equity (*adil*). Equity means that everybody can have their right after doing their obligation. Religious and Tolerant (*religius-toleran*) are the expected characteristic of Malang City communities, and it is realized by convincing communities to apply religious value into their mindset, attitude and behavior. Any differences must be respected and referred as the factors supporting local development. A tolerant religious understanding shall reduce SARA-laden conflict and dispute in the communities of Malang City.

Malang City shall be the leader (*terkemuka*) compared to other cities in Indonesia. It corresponds with great achievement through hard work and international acknowledgement. In 5-years in the future, Malang City must reach many achievements in regional, national and international levels. Being a leader also means a pioneering.

City situation that is secure and ordered (*aman dan tertib*) is necessary for community good. Secure situation means that Malang City communities are free from any disturbances, either physical or non-physical, that may threat life convenience and community activity. Conducive situation can also facilitate development process. In order to warrant the secure situation for communities, the government of Malang City attempts to establish community orderliness.

Malang City communities with culture-based (*berbudaya*) will conserve the noble values in their behavior, attitude, and daily activity in whatever place. Communities will respect courtesy, politeness, social value, and custom in the daily life. Culture-based behavior is derived from the conservation of cultural tradition as old-days legacy but revitalizing the meanings to be used in current and future days.

Malang City that is beautiful (*asri*) is great aspiration. City environment that is beautiful, grace, fresh and clean is the gift from God to Malang City. However, this beauty decreases due to city development that is not attentive to environment aspect. Malang City in next five-year must be recovered its beauty, clean, fresh and grace appeals. Any development elements in Malang City, either physical or non-physical, must consider environment preservation as main consideration. It can be realized by obvious participation from all communities, without exception.

Educated (*terdidik*) is a condition when all communities obtain reliable education as required by legislation. The mandate given by Law No.12/2012 has required the provision 12-year base education for all Indonesia citizens. Communities will be provided education and skill which can be useful for their life choice and profession. The educated communities are always mobile to develop Malang City with the government of Malang City.

Malang City concept as City of Tourism has also been stated in the mission of developing Malang City as the tourism destination city that is secured, comfort and culture-based. By this concept, the mission is directed to present Malang City as modern culture city. Traditional noble values respected by communities and any traditional cultures will be maintained and revitalized. Tourist locations with historical values will be cared, developed and integrated with modern development of Malang City. It is then expected that the government of Malang City, led by Mr. Moch. Anton, will convert Malang City into a modern culture-based tourism destination. Structures-infrastructures for city recreation are enlarged, renewed and improved to attract the visit of domestic and foreign tourists. Investments into tourism sector are stimulated and facilitated to enforce tourism appeal of Malang City.

The concept of City of Industry is supported by the mission to encourage the productivity and competitiveness of informal economic behavior. Such mission is realized by government support to the entrepreneurs at informal economic sector by building their capacity to deal with global competition. Economic sector policy is directed toward the empowerment and reinforcement of the entrepreneurs at informal economic sector. It is marked with the development of household-based informal enterprise (home-industry), the restructuring and development of street vendor business, the restructuring and development of seasonal business, and the empowerment of competitiveness of peddlers.

By these measures, it is expected that Malang City communities may life well in their economic sector. Government support to economic sector shall help Malang City communities to develop their business, and it is meaningful to realize the concept of Malang City as City of Industry.

Vision and mission always change with the succession of leadership in Malang City. As a result, City Branding Concept also changes. Malang City cannot escape from this trend. Worse, City Branding Concept is not communicated well. It remains clear before that good government communication is when government can deliver information and ideas properly and clearly to communities in order to achieve national goals. However, there is ambiguity across communities in understanding City Branding of Malang City, and it is a proof that government fails to convey this identity properly. Such ambiguity happens not because City Branding changes dramatically but only adjusts with the latest condition of Malang City without changing the fundamental concept. As explained by Mr. Sudarso, from the Division of Environment Order in the Agency of Life Environment for Malang City (interview, Malang, 2014), whoever elected as Malang Mayor is always influence vision-mission of Malang City because this vision-mission is often submissive to the idealism of the leader. Despite the sense of submission, it is still not far away from the concept of Tri Bina Cita Kota Malang. As stated by Mr. Sudarso, Malang City has long ago used the City Branding of Tri Bina Cita, and this concept must be internalized deeply into the communities. Any concepts brought by new mayor are not quite different from Tri Bina Cita, and thus, all directions of development and character building are appointed toward education, tourism and industry.

Government communication not only concerns with good communication to communities, but also to internal institutions. Good communication across internal institutions play significant role for the success of City Branding. The branding of "Malang Kota Bunga" (Makobu) promoted by Mr. Peni S, the former mayor, is distracted by the park of concrete buildings and the growth of store houses and malls. Mr. Slamet admits that Makobu is not proper anymore for the recent condition of Malang City. The administration of Mr. Moch.Anton has prepared new programs that are pro for environment, and budget allocation for environment is increased to empower the implementation of the expected City Branding.

Different opinion is raised by Mr. Sulton, the Head of Division of Data Recording and Evaluation in the Agency of Local Development Planning (Bappeda) (interview, Malang, 2014), who says that iconic un-specificity is becoming evident because Malang City is a tourism transit city before the tourists go to Batu and Malang Regency. This arrangement conforms to Tri Bina Cita Kota Malang. Mr. Sulton asserts that Malang City is only a transit before tourists visit Batu City or travel to Malang Region, and therefore, this concept must be renewed. For communication across institutions, it has been regulated by legislation and Internal Affair Minister's Decree, and therefore, the standing of local leader shall not influence the communication between institutions in Malang City.

Concerning with ambiguity among communities, Mr. Sulton comments that it is caused by the failure of the government of Malang City to communicate properly government vision and mission. Idea and concept from the government, as consequence, are hardly internalized into communities' memory.

Basically, government must have a strong commitment for two-way communication and therefore, there will be good feedback from communities about the program released by government. Not only that, interface encounter shall be made as the priority for the successful communication. Successful communication is not only achieved by installing the announcing boards in public facilities in Malang City. Communities may only see at glance these boards and never discern about the content of communication delivered by government.

Publication must be arranged well by attending punctuality and accuracy. As similar with City Branding Concept, in the case of the succession of local leader which is always followed by the change of City Branding, the publication of the successive City Branding to communities must be proper and on time.

A periodic term of local leader, or usually five-year term, is very short and also not adequate to publicize City Branding Concept in proper manner. Communities still remember City Branding Concept from the previous local leader, and thus, new concept is hardly to be strongly internalized to communities. Communication channel used by government shall be affordable to communities. City Branding Concept must be made recognizable on time and on target, and be acknowledged not only in the final days of administration. Political messages shall be clear and not biased to ensure well acceptance from communities.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of research, it can be concluded The government of Malang City is not consistently securing and developing city identity because the identity changes with the succession of mayor leadership. Policy communication done by new government is not sustainable in every periodic term, and it seems that the program of city identity is broken from one leadership period to another.

Government does not care enough to the development of identity for Malang City. Securing city identity is reduced into an acronym because it is considered as the fulfillment of government interest to implement leadership vision-mission. Thus, the idealism of identity often fails to realize the function of city identity as being the distinctive marker of city from others, and also being the driver to inspire and motivate communities to move together toward city development and also to encourage investors and peoples out of Malang City to visit Malang City.

Policy communication done by government for securing city identity tends to be top-down without participation of relevant stakeholders such as board of representatives, relevant agencies, and communities.

Suggestion some suggestions are given, such as: The government of Malang City shall involve relevant stakeholders including communities, relevant agencies and all elements when determining city identity. By keeping this participation, the resultant identity will represent what communities demand in city development.

Deep research is needed to determine things that can be explored properly to be the identity of Malang City. Through cautious exploration, the resultant identity may reflect all interests behind the development of a city.

Policies and intentions must be directed toward sustainability of development program regardless the change of leadership period. It is crucial matter to keep the sustainability and consistency of city identity which may motivate stakeholders to develop city identity for the benefit of communities.

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