

## Research Article

# New Form of Social Activism Through Mural Art in Indonesian Schools

Donny Trihanondo<sup>1\*</sup> and Rinyaphat Nithipataraahnan<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>Telkom University, Bandung, Indonesia<sup>2</sup>Silpakorn University, Bangkok, Thailand**Abstract.**

Previous research has shown that murals can be used for social campaigns to mobilize certain elements of society. This paper discusses the application of murals and signage as a part of a new form of social activism through street art in Indonesia, especially as one of the supports for activism in the context of the new normal after the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia. Schools that focus on secondary and higher education are partners in implementing this campaign. This research is considered as qualitative research, which aims to obtain the development of a campaign form that is suitable for use in education. This research uses a participatory methodology to support the development of street art and murals that will be used. The results obtained from this study indicate that the target community of the vocational school was very enthusiastic during this research project. The murals being made deliver a message of zero-waste campaign. In addition, the murals and signage that have been developed have proven to be able to form a positive environmental atmosphere for the target school community. This research is an initial study regarding the impact of murals on education, especially in vocational education. In the future, it is hoped that this research can be replicated in other schools to obtain more experimental samples.

**Keywords:** social activism, mural art, Indonesian school, pandemic, zero waste

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## 1. Introduction

Murals have been widely used throughout the world, especially for filling in empty walls. In addition to its function as filler, murals are also considered very effective in conveying certain messages, be it political messages, marketing, or social and cultural messages [1]. Therefore, murals can be viewed not only from an aesthetic point of view, but also as a means of communication and information. Previous research by Susanto has also shown that murals can reduce the level of vandalism in the form of graffiti that tends to be careless [2]. Another effect that needs to be taken into account is the effect of murals as placemaking, forming a certain feeling of environmental atmosphere that can support certain activities. This is especially very important to be applied to public spaces such as schools which are places for building the character of their students.

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It is important to differentiate between murals, graffiti, and street art before continuing the conversation. Any piece of art that is painted or painted onto a wall, whether indoors or out, can be called a mural [3]. When painted to walls, graffiti can take the shape of signatures or other written forms and is often created using permanent markers or spray paint [4]. Although the terms graffiti and street art are sometimes used interchangeably because to their shared illicit origins, there is a clear distinction between the two in terms of their accessibility to the general public. Unlike graffiti, which is intended only for the eyes of other writers, street art is designed for a larger audience through the use of easily recognizable symbols and imagery from popular culture [5] In light of this larger definition, it's evident that the term mural encompasses more than simply written expression and may be used interchangeably with graffiti and street art.

## 1.1. Research and Community Service utilizing Mural Projects

This paper is part of the publication of research and community service activities carried out in various schools and educational bodies, one of which is a school that focuses on Chemistry and Pharmacy vocational education located on Jl. Soekarno Hatta, Bandung city, West Java, Indonesia. There are several reasons why this school is chosen as a partner for this research and community service activity. Vocational schools are specific schools, where specific themes can be raised and also instilled in their students. This school also has achievements where many students successfully work in accordance with the fields of expertise taught at the school. In addition, many of the students also continue to higher education levels and are accepted at renowned universities. These are a good indicator of the school quality that should be supported by the school designed environment especially in the form of murals. The main activities carried out during this research and community service includes revamping the school area and making murals, as well as making signage.

## 2. Research Methods

Aesthetic or artistic theory, and functional-structural theory are being applied to examine all of the data collected through the qualitative methods of observatory, objective interviews, and writings' study [6]. A communication campaign uses various media to reach the targeted audience. To achieve desirable goals, the coordination related to the media usage should also be supported by methods of interpersonal communication and



**Figure 1:** Painting murals on school's wall.

community-based communication. At this time, the campaign has become very strategic and also complicated. To support the effectiveness and achieve the goals that have been set, a campaign designer must have better understanding of the context and the characteristics for the campaign to be created. Therefore, in a more specific community, such as school community, the involvement of teachers are especially crucial. This is in accordance with research conducted by Coffman in 2002 [7]



**Figure 2:** Coordination Meeting between Teachers and Research Team.

## 2.1. Methods of Data Collecting

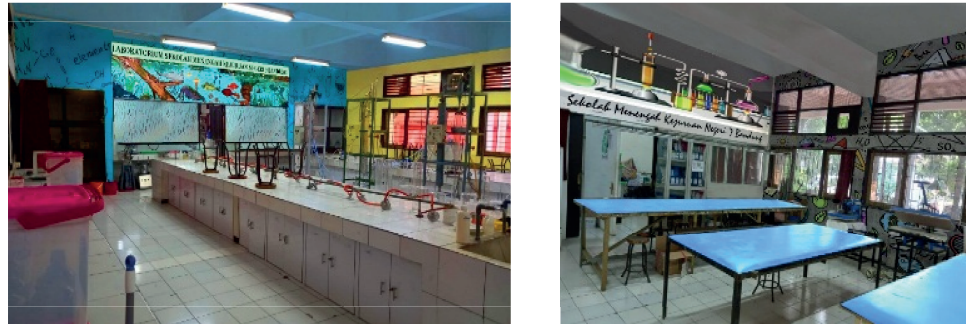
Specific research methodology which was suitable to be implemented in this form of research is research based on participatory action research [8]. This study seeks to change the habits of the target community or partners. The target community is targeted to be able to change their habits, especially in maintaining the school environment, and being able to have new ideas to develop a comfortable environment and support the ongoing educational process. This study uses a qualitative method, which is supported by a visual culture transformation theory approach. As part of community service, every activity carried out is recorded and subsequently evaluated related to planning, activities, and follow-up actions. In essence, there are three stages of research, namely planning, activity and evaluation. The outcome results of these research activities that have been analyzed are in the form of a recommendation for follow-up that can be beneficial for the community as well as activities that can be carried out in the future.

This study is an analysis based on qualitative methods, namely research that produces discussions and results that can be implemented in further research. Previous studies are also used as a reference related to the research activities carried out. This research is an initial research that needs to be studied further in terms of the results and the method used, especially if it is used in communities and locations that are quite far away. The conclusions obtained are expected to enrich scientific treasures, especially those related to communication science and art that can be referred to in conducting community service-based research in the future.

## 3. Result And Discussion

The process of making murals are not completely left to partners, in this case members from school. However, the research team coordinates activities from design, implementation, to evaluation. In the activities coordinated by the research team, members from school were gradually involved, starting from the teachers, students, to the support staff at the school. In practice, the research team previously held a coordination meeting with the teachers, who were responsible for the laboratory and the rooms where the murals would be made. In carrying out all these activities, the research team tries to use technologies that can help make murals faster and better, including the usage of infocus projector technology. From the process that has been carried out, it has been found that ideas can come not only from the research team, but ideas can also arise from

teachers and students. These ideas continue to emerge so that they can be applied directly by students and teachers, and in the end, produce a product that was previously unimaginable.



**Figure 3:** Mural Concepts for school Laboratories.

The importance of murals and how they might be preserved in their natural environments should also be highlighted. Several muralists were dissatisfied with the durability of their creations. The public's understanding of an artwork's worth is an important factor, as is the difficulty of securing authorization from relevant parties. A muralist in Singapore named Priyag Dia illustrates one of these letdowns. He feels bad about his work being destroyed, but he refuses to apply for a license. He elaborated, "Now that people have access to this area, they have a new appreciation for, and a new appreciation for display on the steps. They are a sort of ode to the cosmos.... As a creative person, I don't understand the need for licenses [9]. This demonstrates the importance of educating the general public on the value of murals and the legal means by which artists can create murals, such as through the use of related parties.

Mural, and street art sometimes could also be confused with signage, and sometimes they can share both functions. Signage itself has a more specific function than murals. Specifically, signage functions as a communication medium to convey information on directions to the place intended by the audience [10]. Apart from being a medium of direction, signage also functions as a reinforcement of the brand image and image of a location or company. The existence of a signage is important for users and visitors, especially those who are not familiar with the locations visited. The presence of signage will also minimize conversations with strangers to reach the destination. In general, both Murals and Signage fall into the Environmental Graphics category, where there are three main functions of an Environmental Graphics, firstly as a provider of information/location/direction, secondly as identity or brand, and thirdly as a builder of environmental atmosphere or placemaking.

Regarding art activism, Artist/educator/activists create and modify initiatives according to the needs of the community, the nature of the issue at hand, and the organizations with whom they work. Collaboration, participant and community centered emphasis, empathy, voice development, and questioning the status quo were all themes that emerged from participant interviews in this study. As the artist, educator, or activist develops, so does his or her collaborative work, and as the collaborative production leads to new insights and views, the person develops as well [11].

The form of a mural with an environmental theme, specifically zero-waste, as the results of the discussion was directed towards the mix of reduce, reuse and recycle (3R) themes, with their application in the chemical laboratory, related to reducing the use of hazardous materials, as well as how to minimize the hazardous waste generated [12]. We also paid attention to the philosophical underpinnings of the work of art, as it is common for works of art to necessitate the conceptualization and explanation of academic philosophers [13]. The uniqueness of this research is expected to emerge from the activities carried out directly in the field with partners. Another hope is that the specific characteristics of vocational education can strengthen the visual concept of the campaign and can be more related to the audience who are also members of the school [14] From the survey we could conclude that there is significant change with the participation of students and other parties in the mural-making processes and it's potential to resolve environmental issues. According to Sunaryo, indeed, the aim of art education is not just to instill in students an appreciation for and identification with the creative process [15].

## 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, making murals as part of educational facilities, especially vocational education, is considered very possible, as well as helping to give new faces and generate new ideas from all school residents who have been deemed to have less attention to the environment, especially the school environment. The key to the success of the campaign through murals is to link the message or information to be conveyed with things that are similar to the daily activities of users, in this case teachers and students. Information conveyed through signage acts as a mural reinforcement, namely by providing information that is more specific in nature, so that between murals and signage at the school are two things that cannot be separated. This zero waste education-based mural produced the following findings, a vehicle for generating new ideas and, at the

TABLE 1: Impacts of Mural Projects for Involved Elements.

No	Elements	Before	After	Change %
1	Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students don't have tacit knowledge about art and art making process.</li> <li>- The environmental issues only communicated using formal signs and within the classroom</li> <li>- Students is not eager or has initiative to work together especially in art making processes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student have better understanding about art creation and value of art, especially mural art.</li> <li>- Student becoming positively influenced by image and text within mural art.</li> <li>- By involvement in mural-making, students become part of change and activism.</li> </ul>	27.7
2	Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Waste and health issues cannot be resolved with formal and usual approach.</li> <li>- Signs are boring and not effective.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- By elaborating environmental issues within mural, environmental issues could be resolved.</li> <li>- Waste and other environmental issues could be delivered to the community indirectly and creatively.</li> </ul>	34.5
3	Mural Visual Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Basic visual style, and artist oriented ideation and creation process.</li> <li>- Slow and tedious style development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New mural visual style emerge through discussion with multiple parties.</li> <li>- Students involvement is a way to make a new and creative style.</li> </ul>	22.9

same time, implementing these ideas, building involvement among school residents in one activity (the mural), as a form of inculcating a culture of environmental concern. The development of murals in Indonesia are still rare, even though it is initiated by various institutions and the government, but it seems that some people still do not understand the value of mural art, so it is necessary to cultivate the role of murals in educational institutions.

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