



## The Role of Social Networks in Strengthening Cirebon's Cultural Resilience

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### Abstract

Culture faces the challenges of modernization and the development of information and communication technology. Along with these conditions, Cirebon City still preserves culture as part of people's lives. Previous studies have shown that social networks affect economic and business resilience. This study identifies how social networks affect cultural resilience using a qualitative approach. Then, this study uses content analysis methods. Data collection was based on interviews with key actors such as the palace family, the city government, and the community around the palace. Cirebon culture can survive amid modernization and technology. Stakeholders have common goals, sharing knowledge and resources, and innovations increase cultural resilience. Further, the royal family and city government believe that culture is the identity and capital of city development. Then, the stakeholder efforts to preserve culture. Moreover, the three palaces in Cirebon City play a major role in maintaining culture.

**Keywords:** Social Networks; Cultural Resilience; City

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### Introduction

Throughout human history, cultures have come and gone, some have a lasting impact on the world, and some lost with age. Culture is slowly eroding along with the era of modernization and the development of information and technology. In this regard, cultural resilience is a strategic issue in the developing country. Culture is a complex system including knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, abilities, and habits of humans as members of society (Leopold & Tylor, 1980). Meanwhile, the term resilience describes a process in which people try to overcome life's difficulties. Resilient consider people who strive to sustain life and contribute to the environment (Van Essen et al., 2014). Despite the uniqueness of culture, resilience means the ability to maintain, develop, and stay in touch with things and people. Thus, cultural resilience is the capacity to maintain cultural identity, history, practice, and knowledge along with time and problems. In dynamic and interactive networks, culture offers innumerable opportunities for diversity, creativity, dialectical self-evaluation, and change ((CB Wesson -, 2013). Then, it makes up the culture and makes it extraordinary. Despite facing challenges and difficulties, culture can maintain

and develop itself. Also, culture persists and encounters with other cultures or diversity. Gunnestad (2006) divides the sources of resilience into external, internal, and existential support. Then, an external source capable of increasing cultural resilience is a social network. Social networks show one or more types of relationships based on values, visions, ideas, friends, and descendants in a social structure (Barnes, 1969; Muñoz-Erickson et al., 2017). It is consisting individual and organizational elements because of the similarity and sociality. Also, social networks have become a daily part of people's lives. In this regard, social networks tend to ease coordination or cooperation to achieve common goals (Asamoah et al., 2020; Rochman, 2019).

Social network link features such as learning, trust, and leadership, which are identified as important in management (Bodin et al., 2006; Rochman, 2019). In addition, the positive influence of social networks is often related to leadership. In business resilience, a firm's external and internal social networks can be leveraged to enhance supply chain resilience and customer-oriented performance (Asamoah et al., 2020). Community resilience to disasters is also measured based on social networks (Wilkin et al., 2019). Most of the studies have analyzed the network through communication and relations between stakeholders to find uniqueness. networking patterns are realized through policy and infrastructure support.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) recognized the diversity of Indonesia's cultures and heritages. It is Pencak Silat, Angklung, Saman Dance, Batik, Subak, Gamelan, and Borobudur Temple. Besides, Cirebon City has a wealth of cultural heritage objects. There are 56 cultural heritage buildings and 17 cultural heritage areas whereas most of which are in the palace area. Also, Cirebon City has a lot of cultural diversity including customs and traditions. This culture is born of the interaction and existence of the Sundanese and Java cultures. Meanwhile, Cirebon is the city with the largest number of palaces in Indonesia that is the Kasepuhan, Kanoman, and Kacirebonan Palaces. The existence of palaces illustrates the history and culture of Cirebon City and Indonesia also. The palace has a social structure of complex social rules to create its culture. Although, Cirebon is known as a shrimp-producing city with an emphasis on service trading activities as stated in the Cirebon City Spatial Plan 2011-2031. Cirebon City has great potential for the development of heritage cities. At the moment, Cirebon's culture and heritage survive amid modernization.

Ineffective cultural preservation may cause the character of Cirebon to fade as a city of cultural heritage. The palace is only seen as a symbol of customs and culture by the local community. Previous studies have studied more about the role of networks in the economy and business resilience (Asamoah et al., 2020; Martin & Sunley, 2015; Rochman et al., 2021), and the resilience of natural resource management (Bodin et al., 2006; Flint, 2004; Prell et al., 2008). The study stated one of the resilience factors is social networks but does not explain why this can affect cultural resilience. So, this study seeks to explore in-depth the social network itself in the context of cultural resilience. Also, this study aims to identify why stakeholder networks are associated with increased cultural resilience, especially in Cirebon City. Thus, this study deepens the role of social networks in the context of cultural resilience. Furthermore, this study produces an enrichment of knowledge about cultural resilience and provides empirical results as to why social networks affect the cultural resilience of a city.

## Research Method

This study approach used the theory of resilience and social networks that was adapted from Erickson et.al (2017). Social networks are interpreted as patterns of interaction and response of people to existing cultural resources (Muñoz-Erickson et al., 2017). Besides, this study uses a qualitative research approach to identify how the pattern of networks among stakeholders supports cultural preservation in Cirebon City. The stakeholders consist of the palace family, the Cirebon city government, and the community living around the palace area. A qualitative approach is used to understand the dynamics of the relationship between stakeholders in cultural activities (Taguchi, 2018). The data was collected in the form of primary data onto interviews and secondary data through official documents and related literature. These data include cultural resources, the role of stakeholders in maintaining culture in the city of Cirebon, the process and form of relationships between stakeholders. In-depth interviews were applied to key actors that play a role in increasing cultural resilience in the city of Cirebon. Selection of informants using a purposive sampling method. In this study, there were 8 (eight) key informants from the tourism and culture office of the city of Cirebon, family, and relatives in the palace environment in the city of Cirebon, and community leaders in the field of culture. Data collection of interviews stopped when the data was saturated (Taguchi, 2018). This research uses the content analysis method. Content analysis is used to make valid conclusions and replicable and objective messages based on explicit rules and their context (Krippendorff, 2009; Taguchi, 2018). The analysis

was carried out on the text based on the results of interviews, documents, and related literature. The analysis begins by sorting out data and information objectively and systematically, processing, analyzing the data onto cod techniques, and concluding the patterns formed (generalizations) (Krippendorff, 2009). This study produces a pattern of networking based on the relationship, influence, and role of stakeholders in supporting cultural resilience in the city of Cirebon.

## Results and Discussion

Cirebon City is one of the cities in Indonesia famous for its cultural heritage. One of the cultures in this city is traditional dancing. Cirebon Mask Dance is a sacred ritual dance. Initially, this dance was not an entertainment spectacle at all, but now it can be seen by the public. To dance masks, dancers need to practice fasting, abstinence, and meditation, which are still practiced by the puppeteers in the Cirebon area. Furthermore, Cirebon City has three palaces whose physical buildings and the royal system still exist despite some changes. At first, the palace was the residence of the king, but now the palace is also a leading tourist attraction in the city of Cirebon. The Panjang Jimat tradition still survives. This tradition is a traditional procession waiting for the birth of the Prophet Muhammad which is routinely carried out every year in the month of Maulid. The ceremony is carried out through the purification of heirlooms and the distribution of food ingredients that are also given by the community. The dances, buildings, and cultural activities are the embodiment of the rules, values, norms, and beliefs that are believed by the local community. Adapting from Erickson et.al (2017), this study explores the pattern of social networks in supporting cultural resilience in the city of Cirebon. Regarding the social network factor, people in the network serve as models for positive functioning and contribute to supporting cultural resilience. Social networks are social structures that show relationships or equality in society. Social networks view social relationships as knots and ties. Nodes are individual actors in the network, as well as bond, is relationships between these actors. Social networks are formed into formal and informal social relationships. Social networks have an unlimited reach and communicate with anyone anywhere. Social networks are used for social control or community cooperation against the government (Bodin et al., 2006; Rochman, 2019).

## Shared Learning

The social network was built by the Palace and the community through a learning process of the arts such as traditional Cirebon dances, one of which is the mask dance. Artists introduce mask dance, especially to the younger generation of Cirebon and newcomers, through art training and performances. Through art galleries, the palace facilitates the public to learn traditional dances and musical instruments. Mask danced is a symbol of the journey of human life. Various types of mask dance start from the Panji mask danced which symbolizes the purity of a newborn child. The Samba mask danced symbolizes the development of toddlers that know human agility in childhood, their movements are flirty, agile, and funny but not flexible. Meanwhile, the Rumyang mask danced symbolizes teenagers who have started to find their identity, as seen from their unstable movements with repetition. Furthermore, the Tumenggung mask danced depicts a human who has reached adulthood and has found his identity, has a firm attitude, has a personality, is responsible, and has a plenary corps soul. Finally, the Kelana mask danced where this dance has an aggressive and energetic dance because it is an accumulation of movements towards the 4 previous mask dances, this dance symbolizes the insolent nature of human beings.



Figure 1. Maks Dance

Apart from that, the palace is a place of aspirations and a parent of cultural arts actors in Cirebon City. Here, batik craftsmen learn about the meaning of buildings and elements of the palace

to be used as ideas for making batik and masks. Then, they immortalize the element of historical objects inside masks and batik fabrics, such as the Singa Barong and Paksinaga Liman motifs. Further, the palace family made the art gallery a center for learning Cirebon's arts and culture for the public and tourists. These activities made the palace's cultural arts increasingly known to the wider community. Besides, Kasepuhan Palace Foundation has an art school, namely Pakungwati Vocational School. This school is also a place to study mask dance, gamelan, and musical instruments for students. As the results of interviews for sources of the Palace and the following art studios:

*"Joint learning is usually related to the arts which involve the younger generation. The goal is to preserve the mask dance. The mask dance was introduced and performed by Cirebon artists to the public, as well as to newcomers, especially young people. In addition, the palace is a place to accommodate all aspirations and as the main actor of cultural arts, batik craftsmen come to learn about the meanings of buildings and elements of the palace to become ideas for making batik"* (Kasepuhan Palace family, 2021).

*"The joint learning activities are usually related to art, such as mask danced, karawitan and there is even an art school, namely Pakungwati Vocational School, the Palace helps teach mask danced, gamelan, and also musical instruments to students"* (art gallery manager of Kasepuhan Palace, 2021)

To sum up, the process of joint learning regarding the history and arts, and culture of the palace by various parties can form a bigger and stronger social network to preserve art and culture in a city which is in line with the statement Fadli (2020) that the learning process supports the development of social networks. Palaces and art galleries introduce cultural arts to the public, especially the younger generation, as an effort to preserve culture. This art and culture are known by the wider community through a learning process carried out by many parties, one of which is the Cirebon batik craftsmen where Cirebon cultural arts inspire batik motifs.

### Regular Joint Activities

Social networks are built and maintained through activities with actors that are routinely carried out every year. Some of these activities are cultural activities that make Cirebon arts and culture survive during the modernization and development of information technology. Based on the results of interviews with the actors, the joint activities between the Palaces include the implementation of the Grebeg Syawal tradition or the Eid Ketupat (as can be seen in Figure 2) where this tradition is specifically for the descendants of the Cirebon Palace by visiting the tomb of Sunan Gunung Jati which is opened once a year, as the following interview excerpt:

*"Joint activities are carried out during the Palace festival, the three Palaces merge into one and each Palace issue its golden carriage. Kasepuhan train (Lion barong), Kanoman train (Paksi Naga Liman), Kacirebonan (Mudi Mudi). During the Palace festival, each Palace releases a different dance, then festival events are usually held in Kasepuhan Square. Apart from the Palace festival, other joint activities, namely during the birthday of the City of Cirebon, the three Palaces joined to fill the top event"* (art gallery manager of Kasepuhan Palace, 2021)

Furthermore, this tradition is a form of acknowledgment and gratitude that contains prayers to the ancestors which are carried out after fasting Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, and Syawalan fasting. In addition, there is the Palace festival where each palace issues its golden carriage intending to display the historical relics of the Cirebon sultanate. This Palace Festival is a medium between Palaces for communication as well as to care for and maintain culture. This festival consists of a series of activities including cultural carnivals, warrior parades, fashion shows, art performances, dialogues, and cultural exhibitions.



Figure 2. Grebek Syawal  
Source: aboutcirebon.id



Figure 3. The 653<sup>rd</sup> Cirebon City Anniversary  
Source: kompas.id

During the Palace festival event where the government contributes and facilitates such as in the form of funds used to care for the Palace to support the event, in addition to financial assistance the government also joins in these activities because the government considers the Palace to be the government's partner in cultural preservation because the Palace has a key position as cultural preservation with a very important social, cultural and historical position, in addition to maintaining the cultural traditions of the Palace it also has economic potential, and vice versa in developing Palace tourism, the Palace needs government assistance because through this activity apart from being able to develop Palace cultural tourism it can also restrain the pace of the entertainment industry (Agustina et al., 2019). Also, based on a statement from the following informant:

*"Joint activities with the government during the Prophet's birthday usually the government comes to Kasepuhan, apart from that when there is an event. In addition to the government participating in the Palace festival activities, the government also contributes in the form of funds for the Palace festival event, and assistance can be for the maintenance of the Palace"* (Cirebon City Tourism and Culture Agency, 2021)

Another joint activity is the anniversary of the city of Cirebon (as can be seen in Figure 3). In this event, there were cultural performances of the archipelago which were distributed at various points, such as puppet shows in the Kesambi field, Cirebon offering prayers at Kebonpelok Harjamukti, Student Creations at the State Building, Archipelago Cultural Performances at the Kasepuhan Plaza, and in the series of events for the anniversary of the city of Cirebon there is a pilgrimage procession to eat Sunan Gunung Jati, the procession involves the Kasepuhan palace, the Kanoman palace, the Kacirebonan palace to sub-district representatives in Cirebon city. three religions namely Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. This pilgrimage procession will run for 5 kilometers to the tomb of Sunan Gunung Jati.

To sum up, each individual or group interaction will affect the quality of social ties, where the quality of these social bonds will continue to increase if they tend to frequently join in doing activities together (Widodo, 2016). Activities such as the Prophet's birthday, Rajaban, the Palace festival, and the anniversary of the city of Cirebon can strengthen the network between stakeholders in maintaining culture. The activity also became a momentum for actors to communicate and share information.

## Collaboration Between Stakeholders

As can be seen in Table 1 and Figure 4, the relationship between the palace and the government has a very big influence on the preservation and development of the palace. They work together and share ideas about the development and preservation of the palace in the fields of art, culture, institutions, and tourism. In addition to cooperation, the palace and the government conduct joint learning activities in various fields, especially in the arts, such as mask dances or discussion of events related to the archipelago palace festival which is held once a year. The Cirebon City Tourism and Culture Office, and the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy conducted socialization and training activities with the palace aimed at improving services in the tourism sector related to services to tourists visiting the palace. Based on the results of interviews regarding the interaction and cooperation that occurred between the palace and the government during events and cooperation related to tourism, palace activities such as traditional ceremonies, and local government activities related to the palace and culture. The palace and the government also discussed the formulation of the Cirebon city branding The Gate of Secret which means that everything in Cirebon City related to art, culture, customs reliefs, and buildings has a deep philosophy. Where the philosophical meaning describes the deep meaning of the journey of human life in the world.

**Table 1**  
**The Role of Stakeholders Supporting Cultural Resilience in Cirebon City**

Actors	Role	Related with
Royal Family (Palace)	Maintenance of cultural assets, organizing regular cultural activities and events, financial support.	Art Gallery, Cirebon City Tourism and Culture Agency, Local communities
Art Gallery	Facilitating cooperation between the palaces, innovation in the arts, organizing routine arts activities and events, art training.	Royal Family (Palace), local communities
Cirebon City Tourism and Culture Agency	Financial support, policies regarding cultural activities in the annual calendar, cultural cooperation.	Royal Family (Palace), Art Gallery, Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, local communities
Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy	Financial support.	Cirebon City Tourism and Culture Agency
Local communities	Participate in cultural activities, and provide resources such as food, agricultural products, etc.	Art Gallery, Cirebon City Tourism and Culture Agency

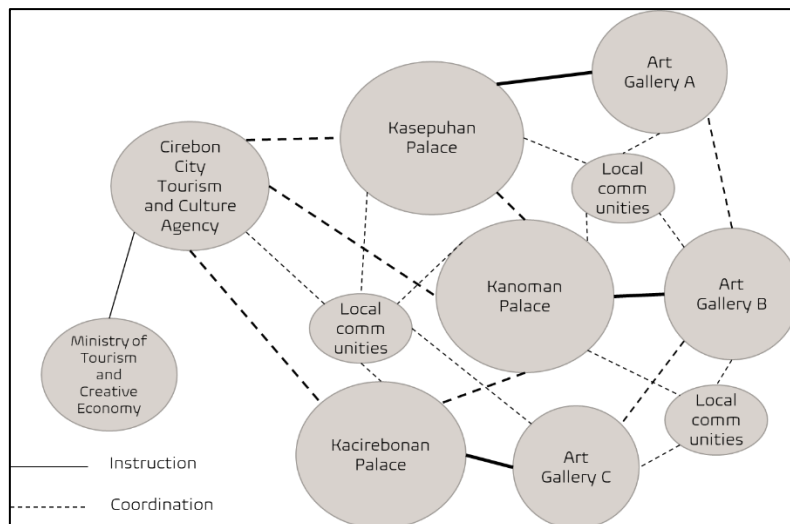


Figure 4. Stakeholder Social Network Supporting Cultural Resilience in Cirebon City

Coordination between the palace and the government is usually represented by the Patih, namely when a ceremony to commemorate the birthday of the prophet or similar activities involving the palace will be held, as well as if the government is holding an event inviting the palace. The government coordinates cultural extension activities, cultural preservation, and efforts to develop palace tourism, such as making tour packages for tourists and revitalizing the palace. For example, the Provincial Government of West Java is currently revitalizing Kasepuhan Square (Sankala Buana) in the Palace area. In this regard, the Palace is coordinating with the Cirebon City government regarding the Street Vendors area which is located close to the main square area to keep it looking beautiful and orderly. Meanwhile, the Regional Government through the Culture and Tourism Office of the City of Cirebon in the field of cultural heritage is coordinating the installation of signs for cultural sites. Coordination between palaces and between palaces and the government is based on common interests, namely increasing the existence of Cirebon culture, and encouraging the development of cultural tourism. Based on this description it can be said that the strength of the network will arise from communication between individuals who have the same goals as others (Barnes, 1969).

To sum up, cooperation exists between the palace and the government and with the community that contributes to the activities held by the palace. Interaction with the community can be said to be very rarely done only if there will be social activities such as breaking the fast together, giving compensation, and when cultural events will be held. In addition, the palace provides a means of social interaction by creating a dance studio where this studio becomes a medium for channeling talent by studying the arts and culture of the palace such as mask dance, playing gamelan, etc. In terms of the construction of the palace, apart from the important role of the government, several arts and cultural communities have also contributed through the formation of tourism awareness groups. The efforts mentioned above aim to build cultural awareness and cultural resilience starting with efforts to protect, develop and utilize culture through the role of the government, the private sector, and community and cultural community empowerment. Currently, the royal family, courtiers, and the city government are working together to create innovations in the arts and culture. This effort supports increasing cultural resilience in the city of Cirebon. Stakeholders in social networks have the same goal. Maintaining and preserving culture as part of the identity and capital of urban development is a common goal of the palace and the city government. The palace plays a major role in maintaining traditional culture in the city of Cirebon. Each stakeholder supports cultural resilience through funding support. The palace is a symbol and the art studio in it plays an important role in maintaining and developing art through innovation. This study concludes that social networks play a role to increase cultural resilience as well as economic and business resilience as described by Asamoah D, et.al (2020) and Bodin et.al (2006). Social networks between stakeholders that are formed affect increasing cultural resilience through the existence of common goals, sharing knowledge and resources, and creating innovations as stated by Rochman et.al (2019; 2020). As stated by Rochman (2019; 2020) that sharing knowledge and resources is a driving factor for successful collaboration between actors in urban development. However, this activity does not necessarily affect the success of a business. The royal family, local government, and the arts community in Cirebon network to preserve the arts and culture.

## Conclusions

Culture is part of and born of social life. Then, cultural resilience is the capacity to maintain cultural identity, history, practice, and knowledge of the city along with time and problems. In this study, Cirebon's cultural heritage survives amid modernization. Until now, the city still preserves historic buildings, traditions, heirlooms, traditional arts, and others. In this regard, networks between stakeholders related to culture play a role in strengthening cultural resilience, not only in economic and business resilience. Networks were built among the palace, national and city governments, the arts community, and the community around the palace area. The relationship is hierarchical between the palace and its respective art galleries as well as between the central and regional governments in the field of tourism and culture. However, the role and intensity of the relationship between the palace and art galleries in cultural preservation are very large and strong. Meanwhile, the coordination relationship is seen between the city government and the palace, between palaces, between palaces and art galleries, and local communities. However, coordination between the city government and the palace is quite intense compared to other stakeholders. This condition concludes that the palace, art galleries, and city government play a strong role in preserving Cirebon culture, but the strong relationship between the palace and art galleries is the main key to the resilience of Cirebon culture. Stakeholders built networks through common goals, sharing knowledge and resources, and creating innovations. A shared learning process is shown between the palace and the city government. Also, the palace via its art gallery creates innovations in the arts and culture. Then, sharing knowledge and resources drive successful collaboration between actors in preserving culture.

The royal family, city government, and the arts community build a network with a common goal viz to preserve the arts and culture. Stakeholders play their respective roles based on their authority. The city government and royal family supported by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy conducted socialization and training activities regularly. This activity aimed to improve services in the tourism sector, especially for tourists who visit the palace. At the time of the cultural event such as traditional ceremonies, traditional music, and dance performance, the palace and the government communicate and cooperate to organize the event. In addition, the palace provides a means of social interaction by creating a dance studio where this studio becomes a medium for channeling talent by studying the arts and culture of the palace such as mask dance, playing gamelan, etc. The efforts mentioned above aim to build cultural awareness and cultural resilience starting with efforts to protect, develop and utilize culture through the role of the government, the private sector, and community and cultural empowerment. The art community plays a role in facilitating cooperation between the palaces through routine art activities. These factors are fundamental elements of the formation of social networks to increase cultural resilience. In the future, cultural resilience needs to be continuously improved by going hand in hand and utilizing advances in technology and information as part of innovation.

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