

The Sea around “Alor Kecil” Vernacular Society: A critical threshold for ecological and cultural survival.

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Abstract

Globalization has been the main factor in the formation of the Alor Kecil vernacular society due to resident's high tolerant attitude. The latest manifestation of globalization comes under the label of 'coastal tourism', which is still in infancy. However, coastal tourism practices have already started to create socio-cultural and ecological issues for the vernacular community in which the sea acts as a critical threshold. This paper explores the changing meanings of the sea for this community, from different periods. It unravels the setting of vernacular life in the coastal habitat through the perspectives of three local actors. These local actors will help me find some insights and findings through their narration of their lifetime story in the context of coastal habitat. Because of their special knowledge and political power in the community, I assume they could represent the whole elements of society in Alor Kecil. Result of this research has shown specific transformation in Alor Kecil vernacular society which are the oblivion of local skills, rupture in the relation between inhabitants and their natural cycle, vulnerable marine ecosystem, and social inequality in cultivation of natural resources.

Keywords: *Alor Kecil, coastal tourism, globalization, critical threshold, transformation*

Introduction

In almost all coastal vernacular societies, sea has always been seen as a source of interminable food supply. However, this pragmatic understanding exists side by side also with the philosophical idea of the sea as a place of origin of the ancestors. The idea of the sea as a sacred area is often depicted in local narratives; sometimes as an unknown space, and sometimes as a dynamic arena of exploration hard to conquer.

For the vernacular community in Alor Kecil Village in Indonesia, sea is also a medium that shapes their society from a series of waves of incoming groups of people who at the end stays in the village. Alor Kecil Village is situated by the west side of Alor Island directly adjacent with Pantar Strait which separates it with its closest island, known as Kepa Island. Long before Kalabahi, the current capital city of Alor Regency in the province of Nusa Tenggara Timur was established as the main port in 1911 (Wikipedia.org 2016), Alor Kecil was the main port and also at the same time a garrison headquarters for the Dutch army since the year of 1854 (Scarduelli 1991).

People of Alor Kecil live in specific areas defined by ethnicity groups. In his research on Alor Kecil, Pietro Scarduelli recounts, “In the late 19th century groups of Makassar, Bugi, and Chinese came from Celebes, in consecutive waves, and they settled near the shores at the

foot of the hill.” Various groups of people from other Indonesian islands saw Alor Kecil as a strategic landing place (Scarduelli 1991) and arrived there, eventually settling as a coherent community. Its community today comes from several ethnic groups: Javanese, Ambonese, Makassarese, Chinese, Timorese, and Pantars. Such a mix of ethnic groups is in fact much like the outcome of ‘globalization’, although here, most of the people are from islands of Indonesia.

This paper will elaborate on the development of ecological, social, cultural, economic, and political life of the society of Alor Kecil in order to deepen the understanding related to the intertwined idea of global vernacular. The paper seeks to uncover the reaction of the vernacular society to the changes in the context of living space in the periodization of time since the unification of society, characterized by a specific plural society. Specifically, Kampung Makassar has become a field study because of its position directly facing the port.

Since its early days, Alor Kecil community showed a high level of tolerance to share the living spaces with newcomers. In other words, the society of Alor Kecil is no stranger to migrants and globalization. Ethnic diversity outside Alor Island in the society of Alor Kecil shows that migration and globalization have been in existence even before the concept of ‘nation’ was introduced. On my second visit to the island of Alor in August 2016, I visited the island to see the life of the community of Kepa Beach after being recommended by an Alorese that owns the place I lived in. Alor Kecil is the closest port to reach Kepa Island which is also a place for fishermen to anchor or rent a boat. Residents’ houses are built with concrete walls directly facing the beach and only separated by the main street. Thanks to the popularity of a French owned island homestay in Kepa, "La P'tite", foreign tourists who want to stay and use the services for diving began to discover the places around the Alor Kecil port. Tourism began growing in 2001, when an immigrant from France got legal permission to operate an inn in the area of Kepa Island by hiring at least 350 m² of land owned by the local community. He began promoting his business that initially only offered a form of accommodation. It is now developing into diving services through online advertisements. Foreign nationals who built homestays in Alor District can be found also in Serani beach on the southern island of Alor, but more tourists who visit the Kepa Island are mainly due to the access from Kalabahi port to Alor Kecil which is fairly close compared with the track to Serani beach. The arrival of foreign tourists transiting in the island has marked the next wave of globalization in Alor Kecil.

The latest tourism development in Alor Kecil raises many questions. Their impact on the vernacular society in Kampung Makassar is related to the transformation of economic, social, political, cultural, and ecological aspects on the patterns of living. Tourism is still in infancy but it has provoked numerous issues. For example, the coastline facing the residential area will be a negotiated threshold which in time may become increasingly critical. Littoral zone (intertidal zone) and the neritic zone (shallow sea) are two zones that most likely will experience the intervention of coastal tourism activities. Ironically, these two zones also house high bio-diversity that ensures balance to variety of marine life, thus it is a zone with high ecological fragility (Green 2009). The indigenous community dominated by fishermen will soon feel the effects of damage to the marine ecology. Tourism activities have different economic approaches to the skills possessed by the indigenous community to meet their daily needs during this time. Exploiting the potential of the coast by various key actors in Kampung Makassar will determine the direction of the transformation of vernacular life on its ecological, socio-cultural, and economic aspects. Therefore, this article will examine the perceptions of three kinds of local actors related to the various waves of globalization to examine the issues of their coastal habitat.



Fig. 1: Alor Island: marked by a red circle in the Republic of Indonesia map
Source: www.alor-diving-kepa.com, 2016

This paper aims to map the forces that use the sea as a medium from the past to the latest arrival of an external force in the form of tourism. The main issue is generated from various residents' mental maps regarding to transformation of their vernacular lives. Those are also abstracted from explanations by Sere (*Manglolong* chieftain and former Director of "La P'tite" Kepa), Murji Patinasarani (*Makassar* chieftain), and Supriyadi May (temporal history teacher who have migrated to the Java Island). Mental maps in this narrative will also uncover typical adaptation strategies of local residents against waves of various outsiders coming into their area, so they were able to survive and sustain coastal habitats today and in the future. This finding is expected to be used as an assessment of the underlying strategy of Alor Kecil's development in the face of the next wave of globalization, so that the local residents become resilient ecologically, socially, and economically against the many faces of globalization that keeps on approaching their homeland.

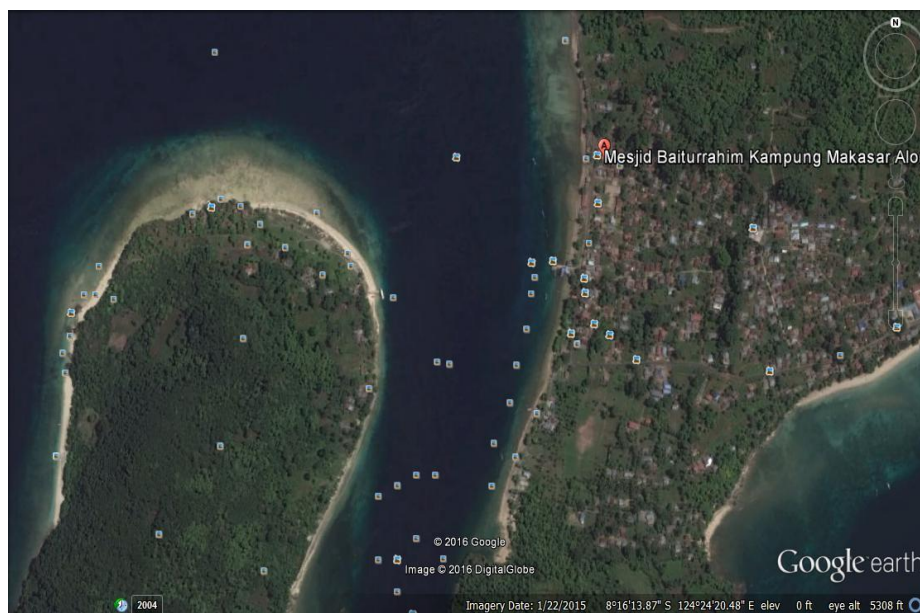


Fig. 2: Kampung Makassar, Alor Kecil in Alor Island (right) and Kepa Island (left), separated by Pantar Strait in the middle
Source: Google Earth, 2016

Between Vernacular and Global: Coastal Tourism and Its Globalization Agenda

Alor Kecil vernacular society is a multiethnic society. The concept vernacular for them is not only dominated by local value. Most of it is formed by the way of life brought by various ethnic immigrants. Therefore, their common sense is performed in the high tolerance and openness to the presence of social influences from outside Alor Kecil geographic scope. When the global discourse inevitably touches many vernacular society, the entire operating life of Alor Kecil people still relies crucially on local technology.

Yuswadi Saliya mentioned that description of vernacular living system from time to time could be derived via observation of local technology (Saliya 2008). This system of technology is related to people's reaction of natural phenomenon in the habitat to require optimal value. Since it is very local, the methods and materials are very concerned with natural mechanism. Generally speaking, local communities have collective skills that define the identity of place and the art of craftsmanship. This skill also becomes the mainstay of survival and will be transferred to the next generation in order to preserve life. Local technology will describe the knowledge of economic, social, and ecological value without forgetting the sacred root stored in local myth as an existential orientation.

Foucault's view of the pre-modern society explained that the vernacular societies have less institutional forms in order to accommodate various needs and they do not depend on the availability of money (Jones *et al.* 2011). Physical and emotional guarantee are based on social unity, like a big family and relatives of the village. They have mutual ownership in almost every objects. Vernacular hunter-gatherer who preceded agricultural society is well-known as egalitarian society (Waterson 1990). Among hunter-gatherer, there are fishermen just like people in Alor Kecil. Traditional fishermen life is determined by the availability of food from land and sea. This dependent relationship resulted in a high degree of intimacy between local people and their natural habitat.

However, the economic agenda and global operation of production-consumption today have changed vernacular gist in many places. Information and technology advancement enables people from different places to meet and encourage the mobility of people (Williams 2009). This stream of global people's arrival brings enormous impact on economic, social, and political practice in the visited place. In the discourse of globalization, Hugh Aldersley-Williams cited Paul Ricoeur which says globalization and its universalization as an ambivalent phenomenon because its progress creates subtle destruction to local nucleus.

In the process of globalization, changes in vernacular system immediately modify cycle of food consumption and replace the entire socio-economic sphere (Jenss 2009). The global economic system puts money as a symbol of the capacity of consuming. This new consumption behavior continues in case of larger necessities and craft a new definition of local habitat. Tranquility and daily joy of the scenic coastal landscape around the house will be recognized as a potential natural aesthetics. This condition trigger local inhabitants to construct a new perspective on their living space as a stranger (Bonsiepe 2009). This viewpoint derives local residents to commercialize their beautiful habitat, which in the context of Alor Kecil appears in phenomenon of coastal tourism.

James Green, in his discourse of coastal tourism (Green 2009), sees a common pattern in the transformation of an area into a global tourist destination. Dramatically, local uniqueness is converted into a tourist attraction. The open space along the sea as social hubs will be sacrificed for the construction of tourist facilities which next produces fragmented habitat and massive exposure on marine hydrological system. Green also observed that coastal tourism area is always initiated by the arrival of pioneer tourist in previously non-tourist setting. Subsequently, arrivals of tourists in large numbers will require the availability of accommodation and other supporting facilities which occupy strategic access along the main

road. Physical development resulted in high property values and increased price of goods. Essential sacred places previously occupied as contemplation spot will also lose their meaning.

Ecologically analyzed, development of coastal tourism will bring a problematic issue. Green (2009) predicts by 2020, coastal occupancy will rise up to twice the current numbers in the whole world and will have an impact on greater ecological burden for the coastal environment. Tourism is recorded as one main factor that accelerates the damage in coastal areas, mainly due to increased commercial activity around accommodation business. High density in the beach will give great change on the structure of coastal habitat. Environmental imbalance in the system will soon affect crucial natural resources that ensures the survival of local communities and automatically changes the social-cultural and economic system of vernacular society. If not well anticipated by local people, coastal tourism may result in the loss of cultural and ecological resiliency. Identity of place would disappear, replaced by the global culture. Destruction of ecological system and vernacular life pattern will create sense of alienation to a familiar habitat.

Exercise of Politic, Knowledge, and Power in Coastal Tourism

The sea is no longer just a carrier of change, a dynamic space for vernacular society of Alor Kecil, but also a new territory of contestation and negotiation that can be dominated. As a fishermen community, people of Alor Kecil understand sea in sectional-depth perspective and not just as a surface because the fishermen recognize the signs of tide, the sound of water, the wave characters, as well as sea creatures (Mathur *et al.* 2010). Sea, in this way, is looked at as an informal and uncertain realm, while a map often depicts sea as a connected blank space. Thus, it shows illiteracy in understanding the sea as a living space that is productive, which survives from human occupation. In his study of political power, Foucault (1982) called the possibility of access becomes an indispensable concept in creating political tension of territory and power. Local people will see access as an opening that leads to lucid experience, while the newcomers are not always innocent. Foucault saw migrants tend to engage in a power system of an indigenous society by bringing a political agenda. Local people who are closer to the access, due to certain political positions or the provision of education, will soon be involved in contestation of power in their own homeland. Besides the agenda of community development, there is also a desire to improve the local actors' family well-being.

Foucault also stated that power is managed by people who possess the power, knowledge, and creativity. Power and knowledge evoke each other. Powerful and knowledgeable persons are capable of holding control and producing knowledge. They further build a relationship of power and knowledge in social groups that acknowledged them. Here, power is defined as the complex strategic condition within a social setting (Aur 2005).

In line with Foucault, Guattari (2000) saw that access becomes crucial in capitalism and warned anyone involved to be aware of the benefits to be more inclusive at the level of macro politic and micro politic. In response to the environmental crisis with capitalist economic system as the main factor, Guattari suggested three manifestations of the concept of ecology which consists of social, mental, and environmental by considering the great power of market and media. Activities that utilize natural resources should not be merely profit-oriented, therefore presence of access can help more people achieve a better life. This agenda is also expressed by Susan Fainstein (2010) in the concept of environmental justice that anticipates the crisis of habitat for powerless community. In this agenda, practice of coastal tourism in Alor Kecil will place the sea as critical space and the coastline as critical threshold. Vernacular society along the shoreline will earn more money from the commercialization of their habitat. On the other hand, they will lose their self-sufficiency in producing food and goods regarding to dedication in tourism activity. It is very likely to find the disappearance of local skill, such as traditional technique of fish-catching and craftsmanship of canoe-making. Subsequently, the economic system will be very dependent on availability of money.

Research Methodology

This research takes a case study approach to examine the issue of a vernacular society's perceptions of sea, land, and their interface. It also examines the globalization impacts traced from the past of migrants' arrival in the island to the more recent tourist arrivals. By Looking at the village of Alor Kecil, especially Kampung Makassar, the research intends to generate insights and findings related to the issues of coastal habitat and vernacular society. It examines the reaction of the residents against symptoms of life changes influenced by different understanding of the oceans' role for vernacular society as incentive of transformation through the search of historical, socio-cultural, and ecological transformations. The research employs the method of descriptive narrative as an element of ethnographic exploration. Its evidence comes from local speakers as the main source of knowledge about their spatial and temporal experience. During the study of symptoms in coastal habitats along with life settings of vernacular society of Alor Kecil, the author communicated intensively with three local actors who represented the proper character roles of the locals: Murji, Supriyadi, and Sere. In addition, conversations about daily lives and collective memories were obtained from other local residents who provided insights into the realm of coastal life. Observations on the citizens' daily activities in the context of coastal habitats were also carried out to produce a portrait of their daily life to throw light on a wide range of questions that become the subject of conversation with local actors. Notes from Supriyadi about cultural life in the village during his study years in Malang, West Java also hints how today's Alor Kecil society was formed.

Outcomes and the Discussion

Notes on Global Encounter in Alor Island, Alor Kecil, and Kampung Makassar

Various historical documentations of Alorese civilization explain that terminology of Alor was widely introduced by Antonio Lombardo Pigafetta who sailed to Eastern Indonesia in 1522. In her study, Kathleen M. Adams (2005) shows the key role played by an anthropologist in introducing the people of Alor since C. Du Bois's publication in 1944, as well as another anthropological publication since 1920s until late 1930s (Scarduelli 1991). The land area of this rugged mountainous island is 2800 km² and is inhabited by at least 140.000 people scattered in the mountains and coastal area. Alor Island is the biggest one in Alor District. Kalabahi, the chief town of Alor District, is the only flat area in the island, where the main port exists. Each community group in Alor Island shows diversity of cultures and languages. Dalton (1984) has found 70 spoken languages that cannot be understood by people outside a radius of 20 km. Those who live in mountainous area are practicing different ways of life to that of a coastal dweller. Due to the isolation of areas of habitation and linguistic diversity, mutual distrust frequently leads to warfare.

In the past, every society had a group of warriors who practiced head hunting. This fact had encouraged Pigafetta to label people of Alor with an eerie image; animal-like, savage, and wild. This is the earliest depiction of Alor society from the perspective of an outsider. In the New Order era, the government began a tourism program as a strategy of nation-building since the late 1980s in relation to two major events: Visit Indonesia Year in 1991, followed by the Visit ASEAN Year in 1992. This propaganda is known as a "National Tourism Campaign Awareness Program" with its seven standard called "Seven Charms", including points of security, orderliness, friendliness, beauty, comfort, cleanliness, and memory (Adams 2005). This standard was clearly oriented to international tourists' expectations. The program has encouraged rural societies in Eastern Indonesia to pursue the standards in order to participate and to take economic advantage. The greater agenda of the program seem to achieve increasingly civilized conditions throughout the nation. Unfortunately, the national tourism campaign in the 1990s has not considered Alor as a potential destination and skipped the island in Eastern Indonesia tourism route.

The economic outcomes from the global recognition of Eastern Indonesia tourism charms in the neighboring islands, such as Flores and Komodo, have been observed by several actors in Alor. These have encouraged them to make independent strategies apart from government programs. These actors usually have certain political power in their communities, either because of their roles as savvy person, coordinator of the village, as well as hotel owners. Local actors have enticed more and more guests as sources of new capital through such access to meet researchers and tourists. Their strategies show a pattern of forming tourist attraction, which Adams (2005) has referred as the crafting of touristic imagery. By utilizing the worldly famous publication of Du Bois as a description of the vernacular society of Alor, since the 1990s, the local actors began to promote cultural and linguistic richness, mysterious discovery of *moko* (ancient bronze drum), traditional village of Takpala, rituals through *lego-lego* dance around ancestor altar as well as the dance of war, *cakalele*. The latest touristic image of Alor is generated by foreign tourists themselves under the label of tranquility and remarkable scenery and diving spot, highlighted by traveler's Guidebook, "Lonely Planet" (Witton *et al.* 2003), in Comparison with the neighboring area of East Timor where there are conflicts after Indonesian Reformation. Evolution of image formed by this outsider has been read as expectations that need to be attached to the awareness of local residents in order to gain commercial benefit from the fulfillment of the expectation.

Commercialization of underwater natural beauty in Kepa Island, in the Alor District has been initiated by a foreign migrant who first visited Alor in 1998 and eventually settled in Alor. Supriyadi, whose house directly faces the Alor Kecil Port, said that Cedric Lechat, owner of "La P'tite" Homestay, brought his wife and children to live in the homestay since 2004 (S. May pers. comm., 5 August 2016). Cedric also employs a small number of residents from Kepa as kitchen helpers and boat crews, while he acts as the main diving guide. Visitors who come to the homestay usually transit in Alor Kecil Port and take 10-15 minutes of travel using rental boat.

The inhabited area of Kepa Island could be identified as two main areas: vernacular housing and the sacred beach, "Haribatang". There are also two commercial areas of homestay, "La P'tite" and Alorese-owned "Merangki" Homestay. The majority of Kepa residents are members of *Manglolong* ethnic group. They are fishermen who also cultivate dry-field agriculture. Supriyadi highlighted the scarcity of fresh water in Kepa, therefore both citizens and homestay management must fetch water for free from a well in Alor Kecil. Alor Kecil and Kepa residents are mastering fishing skills to provide daily food. Electricity is produced from photovoltaic panels in each house, provided by the local government. Through tourism business in Kepa Island, Pantar Strait has served as a medium of economic development for Alor Kecil people, especially in Kampung Makassar, with all constructive or destructive impact of this embryo of coastal tourism.

The Intricate Idea of Vernacular in Alor Kecil Society

In the context of Alor Kecil, Murji Patinasarani, an Ambon descent and one of Makassar chieftains, has shown the idea of diversity in the lineage of his community as an excellence, especially in Kampung Makassar as the area of migrants with smaller number of native of Alorese from two ethnicity groups of *Manglolong* and *Baorae* (M. Patinasarani pers. comm., 8 August 2016). Murji recalled his memory of how the arrival of diverse ancestors coincided with the arrival of the Dutch in Indonesia in the 1600s. Land along the coast was owned by an ethnic group of highlander, well known as *Bampalola* people, who were very modest to accept the migrants from Makassar, Ambon, and Java. They invited the migrants to settle down and live as brothers. The migrants brought new skills and goods that were not available to indigenous community. Several skills that have been exchanged were trading, agriculture, deep-well making, and religious practices. Meanwhile, Alorese taught the newcomers about fishing techniques with traditional traps, *bubu*, and by diving. This acculturation of shared-skill has constructed the living pattern in Kampung Makassar today.

In his unpublished notes during his study year, Supriyadi mentions that Alor Kecil vernacular society consists of five ethnic groups: *Baorae*, *Manglolong*, *Lekaduli*, *Makassar*, and *Mudiluang* (Supriyadi 2013). Murji is very proud of tranquility in his village even after different migrant groups have settled there, who still have the freedom to practice their culture of origin and certain rituals. Although people of Alor Kecil are Muslims, they still have rituals to honor their ancestors which is often combined with the religious events. The biggest event, circumcision ritual, lasts for 7 days and includes all ethnic groups in Alor Kecil by positioning the ancestor's stone altar as the axis mundi (Scarduelli 1991). Marriage and funeral are social events which also rely on the solidarity of the whole community in Alor Kecil, in order to supply food and other necessities.

Every ethnic group in Alor Island has one central sacred space in the form of a stone altar. This place serves as the meeting area with a living ancestor, believed as their guardian spirit. In the old era of warfare, head-hunters will present an enemy's head at this altar. Typically, an altar made of stone or coral which are arranged in a circular form to symbolize female element and, on top of it, forked wooden post is invested, as a symbol of male element (Waterson 1990). One of the nearest altars of Kampung Makassar takes place in the sacred beach of Kepa Island and is maintained by chieftain of *Manglolong*. *Manglolong* people believe that their ancestors came from and still inhabit the sea. *Manglolong* fishermen are relying on the generosity of their ancestors to provide many fish. At a certain time, a ritual of gratitude is held in a restricted area of "Haribatang". A symbolic function ascribed to a wooden post in *Manglolong's* altar is replaced by the existence of an ancient giant banyan tree. This sacred navel is understood as the wedding place of sea guardian, "Buiharipanatu", and land guardian, "Muji Mujemo" (Sere pers. comm., 11 August 2016).

Alor Kecil vernacular life appears to be rooted in hunter-gatherer groups. This group possesses a specific cosmological perspective of their habitat as the arena of adaptation, where people are eager to engage and reciprocally nurture the element of their natural habitat and own less property. This local behavior is very different from agriculture societies who tend to exploit and occupy Nature as their own property to create artificial and conditioned settlements (Waterson 1990). After all, the root of pluralistic society of Alor Kecil performs a great tolerance of change that come from the outside. They process knowledge from the outside to eventually mix it with daily practice to generate new life forms with more benefits.

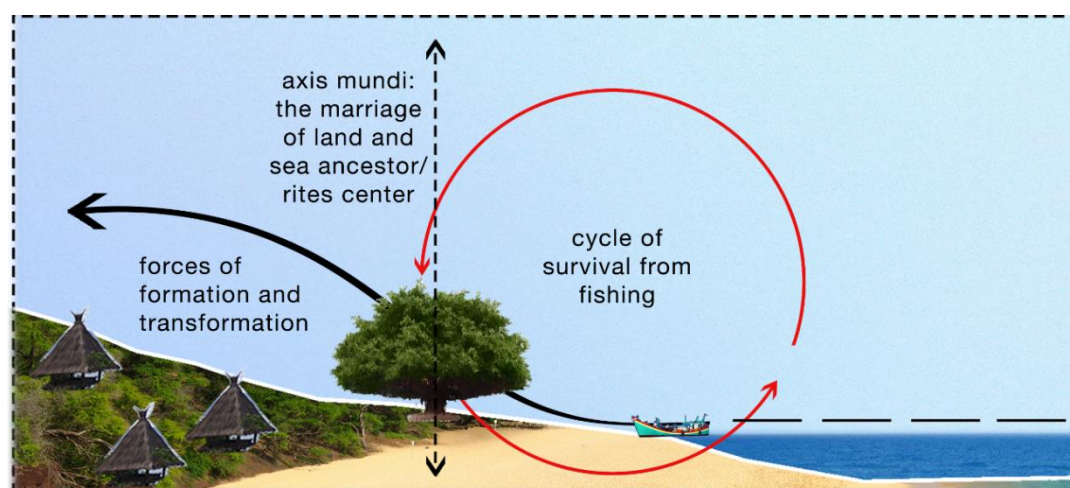


Fig. 3: Spatial Formation in Alor Kecil Vernacular Society

Source: Klara Puspa Indrawati, 2016

“Sea is always our habitat”: Reproduction of Values in the Past, Present, and Future Globalization

Pantar Strait has confronted indigenous people of Alor Kecil with global society since a long time ago. Sea has been explored from the surface to the depth by the fishermen of Kampung Makassar. Alor Kecil boys master the techniques of diving to catch a fish from the age of 8 years old. They also learn other techniques by using nets and light. Since “La P'tite Homestay and Diving” was built, local people have a new awareness of the underwater world in Pantar Strait. Enjoying the beauty of the coral reefs while swimming and diving without equipment is a daily pleasure for the children in Alor Kecil and Kepa Island. This amenity was not seen as the ‘other’ of everyday schedule before. However, since underwater beauty of Alor started to be recognized by a publication of international tourism media in the early 2000s, local residents started to exoticize their daily perks and see it as a tourist expectation with potential profit. This mental map about the sea has marked the pre-physical encounter between local people and another global society and has described the sort of political exercise of power and knowledge. Supriyadi (S. May pers. comm., 11 August 2016) stated that he feels lucky to live next to the sea because the sea is now unlocking the potential of new livelihoods in the form of diving service. He also explained that Alor Kecil people are striving to involve in diving service business because of the opportunity to earn more money than in the fishing business.

Fishing activities around the port usually begins at 4:00 am using a canoe or boat that is usually owned and operated by two people. Fishermen will be returning to the shore at 6:00 am to sell their catch to the wholesaler, known as *papa lele*, which will bring the entire fish to Kalabahi market. From the conversations with local women, it was revealed that the catch may include fish, shrimp, squid, and octopus. *Papa lele* is considered very helpful in reducing the burden of work in fish sales. First, fish are caught to be sold, the rest are consumed as source of daily protein. Children who lived before 1980s were encouraged to assist parents in fishing activities. Education was not a priority. However, since the elementary and secondary schools came into being, parents began to encourage their kids to have a better education in pursuing a better life. Being a Fisherman is not prioritized as a future profession for the next generation. However, it was only in 2014, that the only high school building in the village of Alor Kecil has been established.

Fishermen’s life is vividly described by Sere, who is almost 60 years old and is still mastering a variety of traditional techniques in fish-catching (Sere pers. comm., 11 August 2016). His sturdy and well-built body shows that he is still doing physical exercise. When diving without equipment, Sere can hold his breath up to 15 minutes. Traps and nets were still used to get fish. For catching higher value big fish, such as tuna, Sere will use a fishing rod. When the Western monsoon passes through the Pantar Strait, from October to April, the fishermen will not go to the sea due to risky currents and big waves. During this period, the land of Alor Kecil receives rain to allow people grow and harvest cassava and corn. The surplus of yield will be stored for consumption during drought periods from April to October which is also a good time for fishing. This complementary pattern demonstrates a sustainable cycle of survival based on an understanding of the ecological system in the coastal habitat.

As a chieftain, Sere still performs the ritual to ask blessings from the ancestors who inhabit the sea. Before moving to the sea, he will pray to the seven sea guardians to ensure the availability of fish. For local people who have a particular intention, Sere provides services to carry out the ritual of “Puhari”, by bringing offerings to the sea accompanied by special prayers for the sea guardians. Residents who hold this ritual is relatively rare because it incurs a sizable expenditure to prepare the offerings of goat meat, tobacco and betel nut. By bringing all the difficulties of life to the guardian of sea, which is understood as parents, people of Alor Kecil have built an attachment that goes beyond the pragmatic view of the sea. Human-sea relationship in Alor Kecil shows personal and communal contemplation of existential crisis

toward the sea. Any physical changes in the coastal habitat will result in a degeneration process of socio-cultural-ecological cognition of vernacular society. By selling fish, the fishermen acquire a purchasing power in the form of money to meet their needs. Fish is still the main commodity, but crops are not reliable anymore. Rice and corn can be purchased any time. Carbohydrates fulfillment pattern these days has dislodged Alor Kecil residents from the natural cycles.

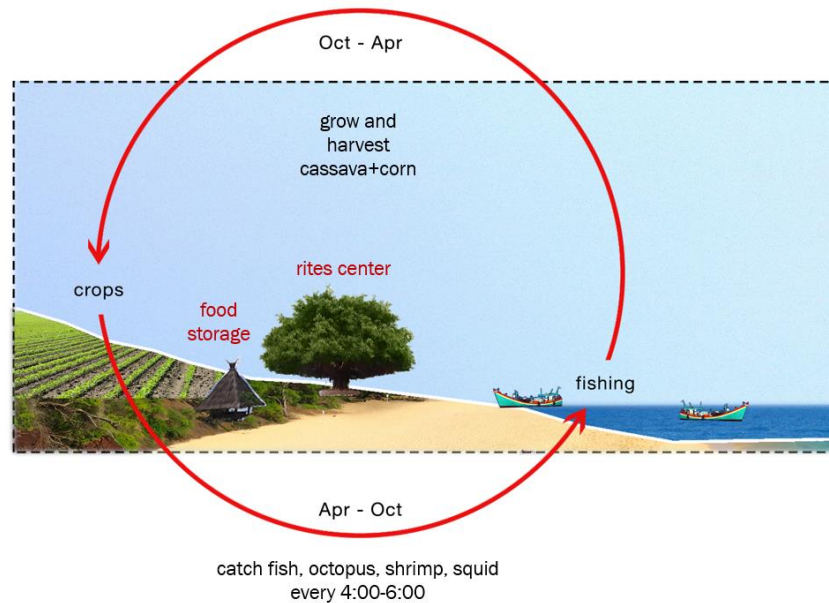


Fig. 4: Cycle of Food Production in Alor Kecil

Source: Klara Puspa Indrawati, 2016

Sere also pays attention to various restrictions on the destructive fishing practice. This behavior seems to be driven by the awareness of keeping the coral reefs and marine ecosystems because he has already involved in coastal tourism since 2001, when he first served as director at CV. "La P'tite Kepa". While he seem to enjoy the marine life, Sere is showing a positive gesture about a new trend in Alor Kecil: youngster should wander to more developed islands in educational or working missions. Sere also confessed that he has an unhappy memory as a 12 years old kid engaging himself in catching fish all night long. In the morning he had to deliver the fish in a rush to Kalabahi (14 km away), getting there only on foot. At that time, town roads had not come into being. He left school to earn his living. This experience has motivated Sere, as well as most parents, to encourage their children towards education, in order to avoid the same difficulties in their lives. Affirming this perspective, 26 years old Supriyadi (S. May pers. comm., 11 August 2016) proudly presents himself as the product of seven years wandering in Java Island. He believes coastal youngsters should migrate elsewhere first to be more knowledgeable and then they can return and develop the village of Alor Kecil.

Nevertheless, children are still taught to catch fish and operate boats by parents as survival strategies. However education now comes first. Today, children will learn the traditional knowledge once they reach high school. Although he holds a bachelor's degree, Supriyadi is still good in operating his boat. After returning from Java, Supriyadi has discovered the potential of embryonic coastal tourism in the village. If he is not on duty as a temporary teacher in a public elementary school, he will guide tourist to Kepa Island. He is excited to participate in the diving business and now he is searching for capital. Supriyadi sees sea as a strategic space to open a business. He realizes that a series of globalization waves were coming from the sea that has brought transformations in his village to be more advanced.

Homestay in Kepa Island is also considered as a business opportunity for local people. Acculturation traces from the past seem to generate entrepreneurship talent among some of the Kampung Makassar people.

When asked to explain the impact from each era of national government, Sere mostly feels the impact of physical development during the Soeharto era. That period is remembered as a time which was safe with hardly any social conflicts, as well as economic stability. Cement and brick since the 1990s has also been distributed from Surabaya and were available in Kalabahi. The new building materials immediately replaced earlier bamboo housing. Today, most of the houses in Kampung Makassar are already made of brick, cement, wood, glass, and zinc roofs. The Soekarno period, which preceded Suharto, is remembered as a time of great difficulties with hardly any physical developments. Building materials for houses and schools were still dominated by bamboo, wood, and straw. Socio-political conflicts were very common. One of the events that stands out was the uprising of "30 September Movement" (G30S/ PKI) in late October 1965. At that time, villagers could not go to the sea or into the fields because they had to carry out night watch in the entire village. Starvation was occurring until 1966, when Suharto finally inaugurated. The Megawati era was marked by the opening of asphalt roads to Kalabahi which helped residents meet various needs. Sere does not really feel the impact of current reign of national government and is likely to initiate changes independently, especially to his family well-being.

According to Foucault's concept (1982) of access, it appears that local people still rely on the sea as the main unlimited access to bring progress from the outside. It has been found that both Supriyadi and Sere hold similar views about the stagnant condition of their vernacular society. This view is also inseparable from their political bias. The two have been in touch with life outside the village. Although never wandered, Sere previously collaborated with Cedric Lechat to legalize and operate "La P'tite Kepa". Currently, Sere is no longer involved in the management of homestay and decided to open a diving service with his son, Sam; one of the young Alorrese men who owns a diving certification. Role of Cedric Lechat seemed to prove the theory of Foucault about access from the perspective of an outsider. Since his first arrival to dive around Alor Kecil and Kepa Island, he has found access to exercise power on Kepa Island by cooperating with the chieftain of *Manglolong* in approaching local residents related to permission. His knowledge of professional diving gives a confidence to colonize an area of Kepa Island in one package with its gorgeous underwater world.

The acceptance of foreigners in their habitat shows the vernacular gist of *Manglolong* people (as part of Alor Kecil) who mostly see positive change from outsiders to renew their communities. However, the result from this perspective is not always good. Foreigners will find it very easy to take commercial advantage of the resources in Alor Kecil habitat for their personal interests only by showing friendliness and hospitality to the locals. Cedric Lechat has rented for decades from an area of Kepa Island and got a warm welcome from the local residents. But, he also privatized the beach at his homestay area. His family live in Kepa Island, however they always spend holiday season in their home country. This condition has been revealed by Yuswadi Saliya (2008) as a new form of colonization that comes under innocent cover. He added that current development of an area is assessed by the acceleration degree of change, which means speeding up the oblivion of the local values. There is clear evidence that the local political actors employed this to build a perspective as the 'other' of their own vernacular context. The local actors are the first to absorb the views from the outside and affirm those views as milestones for future action.

“Tourism is our next opening”: Local Actor’s Imagination of Attraction and Local Development

Sere now faces the bitterness of coastal tourism. Since the change of business system from CV to PT in 2013, Cedric Lechat took over the director position of “La P’tite” from Sere. Sere reacted by suing Cedric to give 50% profit from 2001 to 2013, because he felt “La P’tite” can run smoothly because of his political power as chieftain of *Manglolong*. From the beginning, Sere mediated local contractor from Takpala Village to build 10 units of homestay with typical houses of Abui ethnic group, the highlander, who called their house as *fala* house. Design of homestay unit is promoted by Cedric in his website as a “traditional village” (www.alor-diving-kepa.com 2016) although it is actually not a house of any coastal habitat. Sere also once submitted a proposal to the district government for funding several lounges and chairs for the homestay. During the work with Cedric, Sere made contact with foreign tourists who know Kepa Island from the website. Legal conflicts between Sere and Cedric are still going on to this day and there is no way out for Sere, which he analyzed was influenced by money politics in the body of law enforcement authorities. However, Sere still sees coastal tourism as the opening with a perfect momentum, so he built collaboration with a diving businessman from Surabaya to run a local diving guidance service while still trying to apply for government grants to buy additional diving equipment. Although there is another homestay owned by an Alorese in Kepa Island, Sere said that the local government was promoting Cedric's homestay in the first place. The government's attitude seems to be driven by the potential for foreign tourists of “La P’tite” to promote Alor globally and bring the benefits of capital for the Alor District.

When discussing opportunities for local people’s collective involvement in Alor Kecil coastal tourism, Sere still sees his people have a very limited knowledge of coastal tourism and diving services. Because diving is a sort of indulgence since childhood and people have collective skills as a fisherman, they are aware of the beauty of underwater world around Alor Kecil. However, the residents have not been able to be completely engage in its business because they need costly diving certification from standardized courses in Java or Bali. In addition, large capital is required for providing safety equipment. This situation creates limitations for most local residents. Hygiene is also a local issue raised by Sere about diving business. Currently the majority of residents in Kampung Makassar, besides Sere and Supriyadi, appear to be still bizarre in receiving tourists in their everyday life. The awkward expression of embryonic coastal tourism could be indicated from the very limited number of local food-sellers in the area of Alor Kecil Port.

Although Cedric Lechat does not seem to improve the well-being of local people, the popularity of his homestay is considered by Supriyadi and Sere to be able to create an alternative business. It is very clear that local actors of tourism business are growing sporadically and not as a group. Indeed, tourism will open a wider access that finally leads people to the dependence on cash. Economic resources will be a significant factor in modifying local life, especially related to the cultivation of local resources which on the one side could be too exploitative, in case of diving business, or even no longer untouched, in case of field cultivation. In the fulfillment of the most basic needs, namely food, residents will lose resiliency and depend on the availability of money as purchasing power to buy daily carbohydrate needs. The neglect of field will lead to broken bonding between local people and their mother Nature which ensures their survival. Afterwards, the destruction of land would be very easy in pursuing commercial goals in the future.

The local actors, who will become agents of change, see tourism as a reliable future enlightenment. They urge the government to include tourism as the main agenda. The absence of tourism in the current development strategy of Alor District (Strategy of 2014-2019) on the other side needs to be seen as critical available time for local people to create a collective plan about coastal tourism and its impact for the condition of their habitat before finally involving

in this risky business. In a report on coral reef destruction all over the world, it is noted that coastal development becomes one of the main causes of damage, together with destructive fishing practices (World Research Institute 2011). Coral reef destruction will affect the availability of local fish and coastal settlements' security from ravage of the storm.

The report also states that since 2010, the sea around the world have become significantly warmer and has been accompanied by the bleaching on coral reef which indicates the loss of colorful symbiotic algae that exposes the white skeleton of coral reef. Globally, increased levels of CO₂ in the oceans, due to human commercial activities, causes acidification process of the sea and rapidly destroys the structure of coral. It was widely published in 2011 that more than 75% of coral reefs on earth are under high risk condition. Indonesia is becoming one of the most vulnerable regions of coral reef destruction. In Fig. 3 it appears that Indonesia has a very high degree of social and economic dependence on the preservation of coral reef.

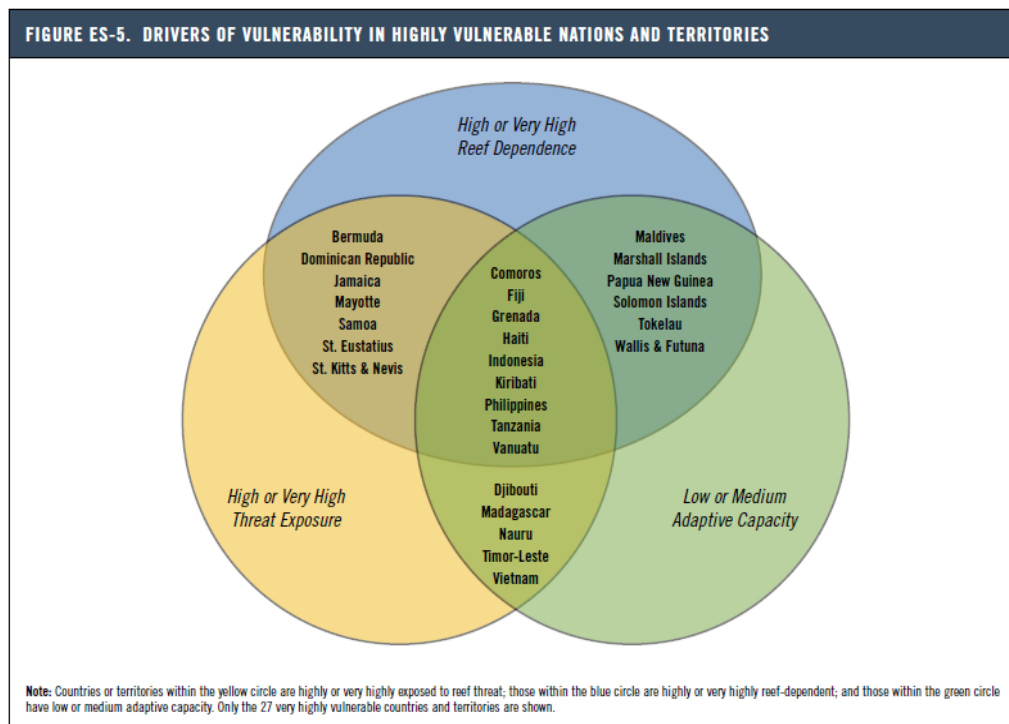


Fig. 5. Highly Vulnerable Nations and Territories of Coral Reef Degeneration in Diagram
Source: World Research Institute, 2016

Ecological risk, which apparently has not become a local concern of coastal tourism activities in Alor Kecil, will generate anomie community who will face a state of confusion about their landscape and neighborhood if it is not anticipated from now (Hester 2006). Cedric on his website states that his wife, Anne Lechat takes an active role in coral reefs conservation and in campaigning non-destructive fishing practices. It can be suspected that her activism movement is also driven by an effort to save Lechat's family business since their homestay and diving service are highly dependent on coral reefs existence. In other words, Lechat's mission is mainly related to their personal business agenda rather than the survival of coastal communities in Alor Kecil. Label of eco-friendly homestay attached to "La P'tite" gives emphasis on scarcity of water and electricity in Kepa Island. These labels can be read as a survival strategy of foreign entrepreneur in the context of natural source scarcity. By viewing Kepa Island as a place of business, foreign entrepreneurs show lesser responsibility for ecological and socio-cultural changes that occur as a result of their business activities.

Those who could play a role as local activists are local actors who are already involved in coastal tourism business; Sere and Supriyadi. With their political power and respected opinion, they can prevent the victimization of their indigenous gist for commercial tourism. Independence of the natural cycle is a short term freedom which brings great long term consequences for local people in the future. The alienation process from natural pattern of life will break sacred and mythical bonding with Mother Nature that underlies vernacular society's existence. This condition is probably just an irrational illusion of future if the local actors are aware of their role to maintain the survival of their vernacular society, first of all by understanding their power as a representation of people's power, then by involving all forms of power that belongs to the whole community. High appreciation should be granted for the vernacular skills to prevent transformation of vernacular life into a superficial tourist attraction.

Good condition of sea as habitat must be the fixed price, uncompromising. This effort should be less profit-oriented, but must be based on local people's sacred engagement with Nature as their father and mother. Thus, it will produce a mutual relationship of human-habitat through local culture and indigenous technology as successors. Our habitation will enrich the meaning of life when its inhabitants understand how it works while the inhabitants themselves play a role of mutual nurturing process in it. Diving tourism as a standardized activity needs to be reviewed in conjunction with local diving skills and local knowledge of the marine life to minimize bad social effects and guarantee democracy and equality in the cultivation of natural resources. After all, Alor Kecil people are sea people. It is in their very nature to be the dancer of circle ancestor altar as well as the dancer of deep-sea.

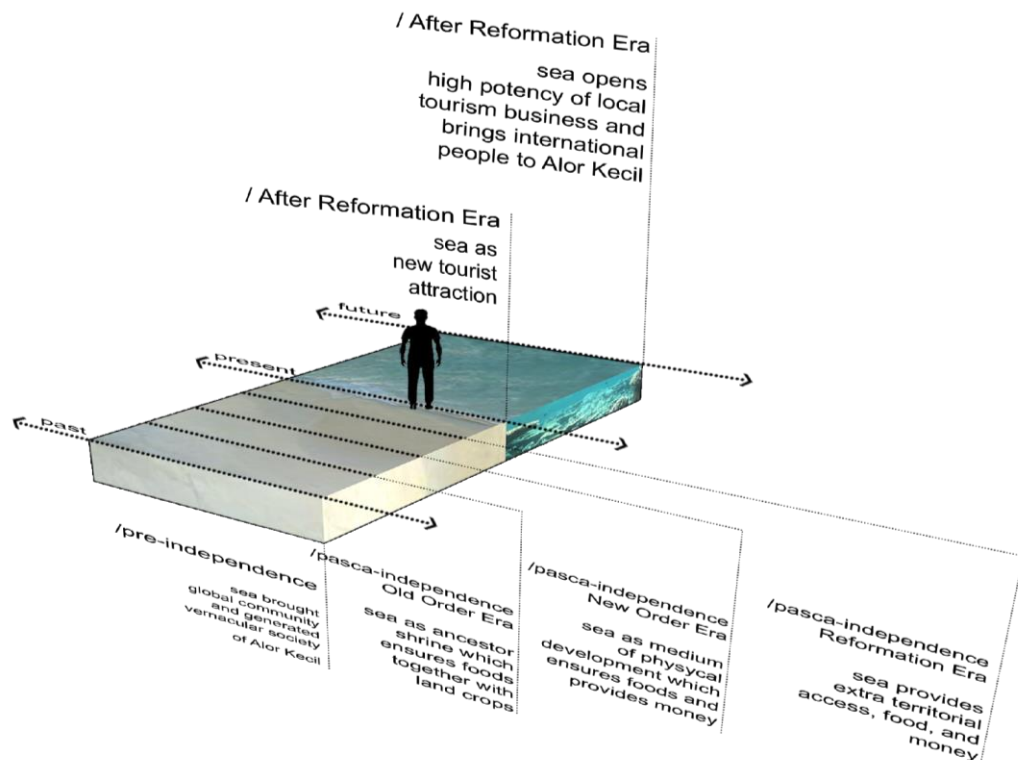


Fig. 6: Alor Kecil Mental Map of Their Coastal Habitat in Past, Present, and Future
Source: Klara Puspa Indrawati, 2016

Conclusion

Local people of Alor Kecil continue to show a tolerant attitude to the changes that come from outside. This attitude brings enlightenment for the vernacular society to enrich their knowledge and experience in processing their life together with the natural system of coastal habitat. On the one hand, this attitude has viewed sea as ancestor's throne and life guarantor. On the other, sea has been utilized as a political space for the exercise of knowledge and power in the context of embryonic coastal tourism recently. Thus, the coastal tourism, as the new face of globalization, has positioned the sea in a critical state. The imbalance condition in the marine habitat will impact on the transformation of vernacular life in Alor Kecil. Some transformations that need to be reviewed related to the loss of local skills for survival in a coastal habitat, disjunction between local life cultivation with the natural cycle because of new paradigm that tends to be more commercial-pragmatic. High dependence on the availability of money to provide daily needs has led to the loss of vernacular resiliency. Coastal tourism development also jeopardizes marine ecosystems and could create social conflict among Alor Kecil community because of inequality in the distribution and cultivation of natural resources. To deal with those effects, the role of local actors are critically needed to advise and guard a series of communal actions and protect indigenous noble gist of their vernacular society by re-exercising their knowledge and political power for the sake of communal well-being.

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