

The Angklung: The Maintenance of Indonesian Cultural Heritage through Public Pedagogy

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Abstract

The Angklung is a musical instrument from Indonesia. The performance of Angklung has survived 400 years of colonial rule in Indonesia, as well as endured in host countries by Indonesian migrants thereby it operates as a political, as well as, a social form of public pedagogy that enhances ‘the quality of human togetherness (Biesta 2012, p. 684). This paper outlines a brief history of the Angklung and its role as a unifying symbol of social cohesion. Research on the migration of Indonesian Colombo Plan students in the 1960s to South Australia and the continued performance of the Angklung in South Australia is explored in relation to its role as public pedagogy. Adelindo Angklung was established in 2011 in Adelaide with the aim to maintain and share Indonesian traditional music in South Australia. This paper offers insight into the performance of Angklung as a form of public pedagogy that has an enduring history across continents. We explore how the Indonesian community has embedded a sense of community within Adelaide, as well as retained connections to Indonesia through performing and practicing Angklung.

Keywords

Angklung, Indonesia, music, public pedagogy, community

The political and the educational dimension come together in the idea of 'public pedagogy'. Although much work on public pedagogy has focused on the analysis of how media, culture and society function as educative forces... [T]he idea of public pedagogy can also be understood in a more programmatic and more political way, which is as an educational intervention enacted in the interest of the public quality of spaces and places and the public quality of human togetherness more generally (Biesta 2012, p. 684).



Figure 1: *Angklung*

Angklung is an instrument that is used to retain Indonesian cultural practices and also a metaphor of the hope for social harmony in Indonesian. Angklung is a bamboo instrument that must be played within a group as it is through group accord that the music is heard as one harmony. As a rice harvest needs community members, the Angklung rice ceremony requires all community members to play the Angklung as one. This paper outlines the cultural significance of Angklung and we highlight the history of Indonesian and Australian relations and the inception of Adelindo Angklung (Adelaide Angklung). We maintain throughout the paper that the Angklung operates as public pedagogy that is used to maintain cultural heritage in both traditional and contemporary contexts. It is also used to teach social cohesion through playing collective harmonious musical arrangements.

This paper also outlines how the Indonesian community in Adelaide always includes an Angklung performance at all of their programs, such as Independence Day Celebrations, Cultural Performances, Family Day Picnics, Social Bush Walks, Conversation Classes and Sporting Competitions to engage the Indonesian and local Adelaide community. The Angklung performance is used to develop a deeper understanding of Indonesian culture, as well as preserve Indonesian cultural heritage for Indonesians living in South Australia.

The qualitative research informing this project is grounded theory coupled with action research by the authors through participating and engaging with the Indonesian community cultural celebrations and the Adelindo Angklung project. This paper concludes with a reflection on the possibilities of hope that the Angklung offers through community events as a collectivist and public ritual that generates social harmony.

The Angklung

The Angklung is made of bamboo and originated in West Java. It is a symbol of good luck that is used in spiritual rituals (Han n.d.). The old Angklung buhun, has tritonik (three) tones, tetratonik (four) tones and pentatonic (five) tones. Some villages in Indonesia still use the old Angklung buhun in ceremonies, such as the Pesta Panen and other similar rituals. The origin of this bamboo instrument is from the spirit of Sundanese, which is the myth of Nyai Sri Pohaci that lures Dewi Sri (rice Goodness) down to earth so that the rice plant and the people can thrive (Widyantika, 2014). The bamboo tubes are bound with rattan cords and the tubes are carefully shaped and cut by a master craftsman to produce certain notes when the bamboo is shaken or tapped. Players collaborate to create melodies that rely on cooperation through listening carefully to the harmony and rhythm of the group. As an enactment of public pedagogy this practice signifies social harmony and mutual respect.

The Angklung rice ceremony has always been played before and after harvest (in June and November) led by the local Elder as an offering of gratitude for a good harvest. Local and specific words and contexts are sung by the Elder as a form of public pedagogy. In this context public pedagogy refers to a learning/teaching nexus created by playing together as an enactment of co-constructing a cultural learning experience that is located beyond traditional schooling methods (Sandlin, O'Malley et al. 2011, p.338).

The Angklung ceremony is pre-Hindu and pre-Islam and was used in the Royal Sundanese Kingdom between 12th and 16th century (travelinenews n.d.). It continues to be practiced across Indonesia despite the diversity of faiths and cultures. The Angklung ceremony also operates as a form of public pedagogy as it was used as a site of resistance against homogenising colonial practices throughout 400 years of colonial occupation. One of the methods of cultural transmission despite the Dutch occupation to eradicate local languages and practices, was playing the Angklung (Bagus, 2009). Elders continue to use specific language to pray for the fertility of the rice crops.

In this sense, the practice of Angklung as a community cultural practice is subversive as it is 'a pedagogy capable of building new political communities' (Giroux 2016) as well as retaining traditional community relations and knowledge. Burdick and Sandlin's (2013) frame for public pedagogy 'centres on a concern with relation and the dimensions of subjective experience through an emphasis on embodiment, affect, and the psychic dimensions of the teaching and learning encounter' (Burdick, Sandlin & O'Malley 2013, p. 55) and in this sense the Angklung is an embodied experience that retains knowledge both linguistically, spiritually and culturally.

Indonesian Cultures

Indonesia is linguistically rich, ethnically and culturally diverse. Indonesia comprises of more than 17,000 islands, and each has their own distinctive language, music, dance, and cuisine. Bali for example, has the traditional dance Tari Pendet, Tari Kecak, local Balinese language, and Ayam Betutu as the popular traditional cuisine. West Java has long been known for its musical heritage using the Angklung that is accompanied by the traditional dance Jaipong.

When the Angklung song is sung to Dewi Sri to celebrate rice harvest, Sundanese Elders, state that 'the Angklung tubes symbolize human life; the tubes themselves being the people. The Angklung could not be the instrument that it is, had it only consisted of one tube' (House of Angklung n.d.). The large and small tubes that are situated next to each other in each instrument represent an individual's growth and capabilities. The

enactment of the Angklung music and its use of different tube sizes signify that all people have different roles to play to create social harmony.

Whilst the Angklung's roots stem from agrarian life it has become a unifying instrument across Indonesia. In this context this interactive engagement is a public pedagogy as it 'becomes a place of enculturation into the logic of personalization' (Luke 2005, p. 6 cited in Freishtat & Sandlin 2010, p. 509) and cultural identity. As Mancacaritadipura and Waluyo state:

Angklung education is transmitted orally from generation to generation, and increasingly in educational institutions. Because of the collaborative nature of Angklung music, playing promotes cooperation and mutual respect among the players, along with discipline, responsibility, concentration, development of imagination and memory, as well as artistic and musical feelings (Mancacaritadipura & Waluyo 2009).

As a result of the transportable nature of the instrument itself, the Angklung was bought to Adelaide to retain and transmit Indonesian cultural heritage by the Indonesian community association in Adelaide that was founded in 1967 by a group of Colombo Plan scholarship recipients. This sharing of culture, music and food has a long history between Indonesia and Australia.

Indonesian and Australia Relations

There has been ongoing connection between Australia and Indonesia for centuries centred on trade. There is evidence of trading between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and Indonesians since the 1700s. McIntosh (1996) claims there is evidence of songs to Allah embedded into Yolgnu song lines that were informed by the Makassar from Indonesia. The Makassar in Sulawesi moved to the north coast of Australia for four months each year to collect the trepan (edible sea-slug) for the Chinese market and trade with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In the 1870s Indonesians from Kupang were recruited for the pearling industry in Western Australia and by 1885 the Javanese were bought to Australia for the cane cutting industry in north Queensland. In the early 1900 there were approximately 1000 Indonesians living in Queensland and Western Australia (Community Information Summary 2017). During World War II, the Dutch East Indies settled in Australia and bought 4500 Indonesian refugees. In the 1950s Indonesian students came to Australia under the Colombo plan. Between the late 1940s to the mid 1960s, over 100 Indonesians arrived each year (Community Information Summary 2017). This brief history of migration demonstrates that despite the impact of colonial practices and Australian labour policies, public pedagogy through food and music has continued with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Indonesians, Australian and Dutch that enhance cross cultural relations.

Adelindo Angklung and the Australian Indonesian Association

The enhancement of cross cultural relations is a key theme for Adelindo Angklung and the Australian Indonesia association of South Australia. The Indonesian community association in Adelaide was founded in 1967 by a group of Colombo Plan scholarship recipients who had made South Australia their home. Australian Indonesia association of South Australia (AIASA) as it is now called aimed to foster peace, harmony, engagement, and mutual understanding between Indonesians and Australians. The main programs of this organization include Independence Day Celebrations, Cultural Performances, Family Day Picnics, Social Bush Walks, Conversation Classes and Sporting Competitions. Other programs include the celebration of Hari Kartini, Fundraising Dinners and Seminars held

together with other Indonesian Community Organizations in South Australia. Australian Indonesian Associations are present across each State and Territory in Australia and it is from this organization that the role of public pedagogy through the use of the Angklung continues.

Adelindo (Adelaide) Angklung was established in 2011 by Ferry Chandra. He and his wife teach how to play the Angklung both to Indonesian and Australian audiences and for them teaching Angklung is important as it is one of several ways to maintain Indonesian cultural heritage and connect to the community in Adelaide. Adelindo Angklung plays with and teaches Angklung to both adults and children. The senior group was established in 2011, while the junior group began in 2015. They practice every weekend, except when they are performing. In the last twelve months, Adelindo Angklung has performed at schools, nursing homes, churches, community groups, festivals (Moon Lantern, Indofest, independence day), not only here in Adelaide, but interstate, and New Zealand. Adelindo Angklung offers school program and the purpose of this program is to bring both Australian school students and the Indonesian community members to foster a better understanding between our two countries. Angklung operates as public pedagogy as its focus is cultural education at public events in order to retain Indonesian cultural heritage and at the same time educate the public about a historically significant metaphor of Indonesian culture that reflects its multi-faith. The diagram below reveals the public sites where Adelindo Angklung plays and teaches:

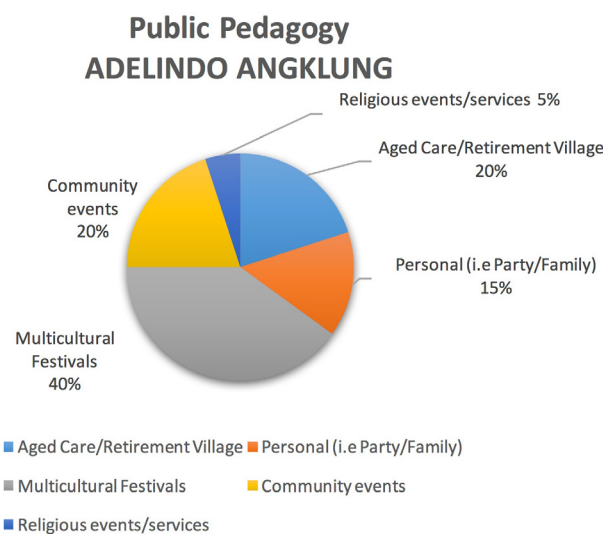


Figure 2: *Public Pedagogy: Adelindo Angklung*

The level of community engagement of Adelindo Angklung is reflective of a public pedagogy as it:

... is not simply about the social construction of knowledge, values, and experiences; it is also a performative practice embodied in the lived interactions among educators, audiences, texts, and institutional formations. Pedagogy, at its best, implies that learning takes place across a spectrum of social practices and settings (Giroux 2004, p. 61).

As illustrated above Adelindo Angklung plays at community events, aged care sites as well as schools. Pedagogy in this sense moves beyond the formal concept of schooling into a performativity that is shared amongst its audiences and is normalized in public spaces. This enactment of normalization ensures that the Angklung as a signifier of Indonesia

sits comfortably in new countries creating a sense of belonging and acceptance. This enactment of belonging through performativity is significant as dominant western culture routinely leaves little room for alternative forms of cultural reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron 1990).

Conclusion

The performance of Angklung as a political act demonstrates the persistence of this seemingly neutral musical performance. However, in Indonesia it is a unifying performance that goes beyond faith and is rooted in the agrarian culture that was pre-Hindu and pre-Islam. Regardless of faith, Indonesians continue to perform the Angklung as a core cultural practice that honors Sewi dewi and in spite of colonial occupation in Indonesia, the Angklung was played. The Angklung operates as a public pedagogy that is underpinned by the value of harmony that is embodied through group cohesion whilst playing the instrument as a collective.

Cultural practices, such as the performance of the Angklung informs social identity and social cohesion. Preserving cultural heritage supports Indonesians living outside Indonesia to maintain a sense of belonging as Indonesians living in a new country. Maintaining cultural heritage through public pedagogy is an ongoing practice across cultural groups living in countries that have been colonized or invaded. Preservation of cultural practices routinely express themselves through the arts and the Indonesian community in Adelaide continues this through playing and teaching the Angklung. In so doing the Indonesian community in Adelaide connects with others in order to build strong relationships, understand cultural values, and impart knowledge to the host community. In its most powerful but subtle form, the Angklung performance operates as a public pedagogy.

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