

Symbolic interactionism in vernacular cultural landscape research

Irfan Sabarilah Hasim^{1, 4*} , Indah Widiastuti² , Iwan Sudradjat³ ,

¹ Doctoral Program in Architecture, School of Architecture, Planning and Policy Development, Institut Teknologi Bandung, Ganesa 10, Bandung 40132, Indonesia

² Architectural History, Theory and Criticism Group, School of Architecture, Planning and Policy Development, Institut Teknologi Bandung, Ganesa 10, Bandung 40132, Indonesia

³ Universitas Katolik Parahyangan, Ciumbuleuit 94, Bandung 40141, Indonesia

⁴ Institut Teknologi Nasional, P.H.H. Mustapa No. 23, Bandung, Indonesia



ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Article history:</i> Received February 03, 2023 Received in revised form Feb. 16, 2023 Accepted March 10, 2023 Available online April 01, 2023</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> Research approach Symbolic interactionism Vernacular cultural landscape</p> <p>*Corresponding author: Irfan Sabarilah Hasim Institut Teknologi Nasional, Indonesia Email: ishasim@itenas.ac.id ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2537-7245</p>	<p><i>Customary and traditional villages, also called vernacular cultural landscapes, are local settlement units whose inhabitants adhere to ancestral beliefs. It is important to conduct research on vernacular cultural landscapes in Indonesia, given the usual and concerning degradation of cultural landscapes. Different places have different cultures and different customary rules and habits. Each has its uniqueness and distinctiveness, so there is no one standardized approach or method that can be adapted to study the vernacular cultural landscape. Different places may require different research approaches or methods; even the same place if studied under a different topic or time frame, may also require a different approach or method. There are research approaches commonly used by the researcher of the vernacular cultural landscape, including phenomenology, narrative study, case study, grounded theory, and ethnography. This article will review one approach that can be an alternative for the researcher of the vernacular cultural landscape, namely Symbolic Interactionism. Symbolic Interactionism is an approach that can be effectively applied to study human groups, community life, and social interactions. Symbolic interactionism is able to reveal the relationships that occur naturally among members of the society, particularly the relationship between intangible symbols, rules, norms, and daily activities, with tangible things such as the formation of space, buildings, circulation, and other physical configurations.</i></p>

Introduction

Customary and traditional villages, also known as vernacular cultural landscapes, are local residential units whose inhabitants adhere to ancestral beliefs (R.C. Lake et al. 2018; Salura, Clarissa, and Lake 2020). Given the concerning degradations of cultural landscapes, it is crucial to research vernacular cultural landscapes in Indonesia.

Many people express concern about the destruction of the cultural landscape. Therefore,

the issue of cultural and environmental integration became a very significant issue on a global scale (Ani, Mohamed, and Rahman 2012). According to Platcher and Rossler (1995), human civilization has caused many natural sites worldwide to lose a large part of their inherent value (Plachter and Rössler. 1995; Ani, Mohamed, and Rahman 2012).

In a vernacular cultural landscape, human beings play a very important role. As stated by Schlüter in 1908 that *Kulturlandschaft* or cultural

landscape is a landscape created by human culture (Martin 2005; Tarigan 2023; Hermawan 2023).

Cultural landscape is the result of the interaction between cultural values, customs, and land use practices (Wylie 2007; Taylor 2012). This understanding implies that the physical elements in a built environment that are created are forms of self-expression of cultural values (Reginaldo Christophori Lake 2016), and customs that develop from the people who inhabit it (Purbadi, Djunaedi, and Sudaryono 2019; Pradono 2019; Widodo 2019).

An appropriate approach is needed to carry out the research on vernacular landscapes. The approach in question must be able to understand indigenous peoples' culture of life so that they can describe and interpret value patterns in a correct and honest manner. Symbolic interactionism can be used to study the cultural indigenous peoples where symbols are believed and carried out daily for generations.

This study aims to identify: firstly, the symbolic interactionism approach that has been used in various research on vernacular cultural landscapes; Secondly, the principles of symbolic interactionism used in previous studies on vernacular cultural landscapes.

The author is currently conducting research related to the Vernacular Cultural Landscape of the Baduy people. This research will be useful in providing knowledge about approaches that are suitable for researching the Baduy community. This research also has the potential to add to the scientific vocabulary, especially knowledge about methodologies and techniques that can be used in vernacular cultural landscape research and add to the sources of knowledge that can be accessed by students who wish to deepen research methodology and enrich the interpretation of symbolic interactionism approach.

Symbolic interactionism

Symbolic interactionism conceived as a response to Max Weber's action theory, against Watson's radical behaviourist theory. Critics of Watson's thought include Herbert Blumer, George Herbert Mead, Charles Horton Cooley, and John Dewey. George Herbert Mead, a philosopher, sociologist, and psychologist noted for his commitment to the University of Chicago, developed this idea in depth. At the University of

Chicago, he worked with John Dewey to develop a socio-psychological research project in 1891 (Derung 2017).

The relationship between man and society that develops spontaneously through symbols that are deliberately created by man, such as sound or vocalizations, body movements, expressions, or body language, is the basic principle of the symbolic interactionism hypothesis (Hatta and Sudrajat 2020). Mead uses behaviourism as the basis for his symbolic interactionism theory but rejects extreme behaviourism (Arisandi 2014; Derung 2017). According to Mead, the concept of 'self' is a process that originated from interpersonal interactions between one person and another (Mead dan Morris 2013; Ahmadi 2008). The 'self' can function as both object and subject simultaneously. Objection comes from within the subject as a fundamental social character capable of achieving self-awareness, and acts as a source of guidance for both the subject and social situations (Ahmadi 2008). Objects apply to the self as a fundamental social character to achieve self-awareness and have authority for social situations (Ahmadi 2008).

Blumer's definition was inspired by Mead's distinction between symbolic and non-symbolic interactions, which can be explained as follows (Jarvinen 2020):

1. Non-symbolic interaction is a form of interaction through movement, such as communication between two animals, where one animal's movement elicits the other animal's movement in response. This exchange does not require self-awareness or "self-communication" (the act of thinking).
2. Symbolic interaction, where actors reflect on the meaning of their actions, take into account the perceptions of other (alleged) parties of the action, and thereby anticipate possible outcomes.

Symbolic interactionism places the interaction between people and their negotiation of meaning at the centre. Meanings develop in and through people's defining interactions with one another (Blumer 1986; Mik-Meyer 2020). Humans use linguistic symbols, conventions, religion, and perspectives to understand each other and define their actions in interactions with others and with themselves (figure 1) (Ahmadi 2008).

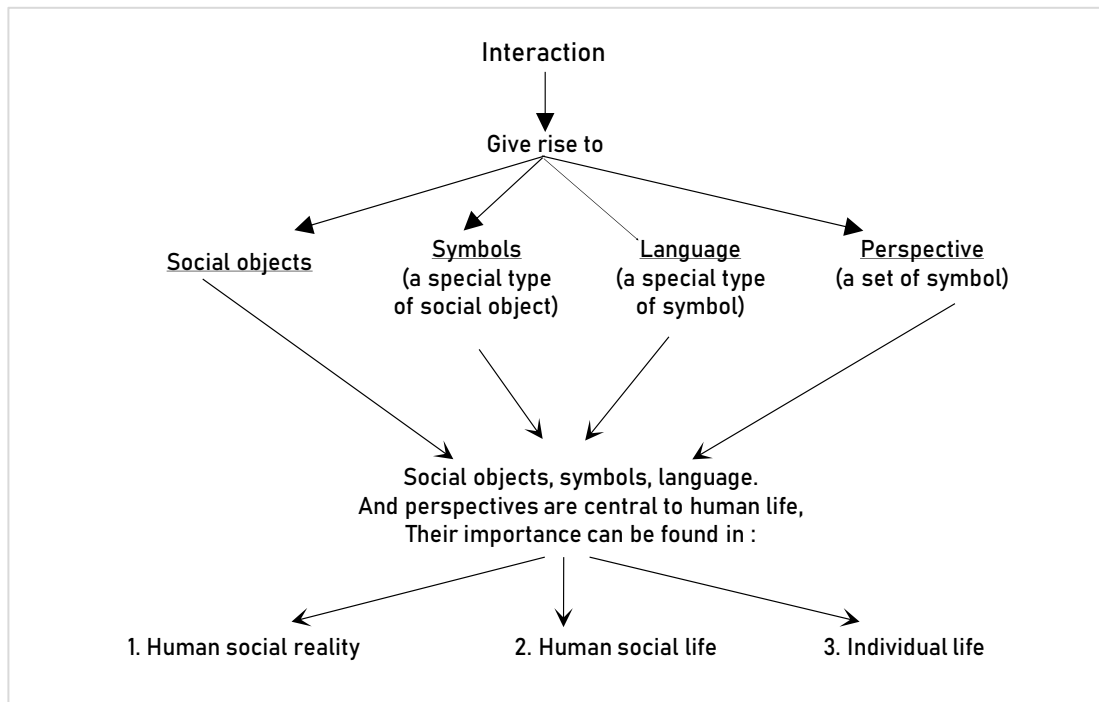


Figure 1. Interaction process
Source: (Caron 1979)

Different languages, symbols and viewpoints all contribute to the formation of patterns of symbolic interaction. Five basic ideas in symbolic interaction according to Blumer, which expands on Mead's approach (Veeger 1993; Ahmadi 2008), are as follows:

1. The concept of self. Seeing them as "self-aware organisms", capable of thinking about themselves and interacting with themselves;
2. The concept of action. In contrast to the movement of other organisms, human action is not governed by circumstances but feels above it and is created through a process of interaction with the self;
3. The concept of Object. Seeing humans surrounded by objects which may be concrete, like a chair; or abstract, like the idea of freedom; or even as vague as philosophical principles;
4. The concept of Social Interaction. Refers to the process by which each participant puts himself in the shoes of another;
5. The concept of Collaborative Action. It states that individual activity gives rise to collective action, which is then adapted to one another.

Labelling, stigmatization and neutralization

As Mead has said, the "self" can be distinguished as a subject or as an object. I am the voice of society within the individual, rooted in previous social experience and reflecting the attitudes and perceptions of others, on the other hand, as an individual acting in the present. Things like this create a continuous choice between individuals and social parts that are characterized by "generalized other". Individuals represent the norms, expectations, and values of society that are internalized by people. If we as individuals want to be understood by others, and to be an integral part of society and its various social settings, we need to present ourselves in a recognizable way (Jarvinen 2020).

In 1928, "Thomas' theorem" stated, "If human beings define situations as real, they are also real in their consequences" (Thomas and Thomas 1928). This theorem was one of the starting points for Becker developing symbolic interactionism in the 1950s and 1960s. With Goffman, Becker developed interactionist studies of deviance and social problems. Becker wanted to inquire about how things are defined, how actions and properties are defined as deviant, and the consequences of these definitions. According to Becker, most studies so far have accepted the

categorization of people as, for example, "criminals," "sluts" or "addicts." This has led social scientists to study individual-level causes of deviation, based on the question:

"What kind of person would break such an important rule?" The answer is: "someone different from the rest of us, who is unable or unwilling to act as a moral human being" (Becker 1963; Jarvinen 2020).

"A deviant is someone who has been successfully labeled; deviant behaviour is an activity that is labelled" (Becker 1963). The message that can be captured from Becker is that definitions, categorizations and reactions influence the attitudes and actions of all parties involved, be they labellers, those who witness and those who are objects of labelling.

If a person violates certain normative expectations, he risks being shamed and labelled as deviant, he risks being stigmatized (Goffman 1963). Stigmatization can have severe consequences for individuals. Other people often attribute a series of negative characteristics to the individual beyond the characteristics that trigger the stigmatization process. For example, people often speak louder to blind people, even if they have no hearing difficulties. Goffman explains the causes of individual problems and describes the future prospects for people who are stereotypically and simply labelled, "once a villain, always a villain" (Jarvinen 2020).

Method

The manuscript search was aimed at the Google Scholar dataset using publish or perish software with the keyword's "vernacular" and "traditional". From this search, 1941 were collected. Added topics related to "Baduy" (figure 2) so that the total manuscripts recorded were 2941 and managed using Mendeley software.

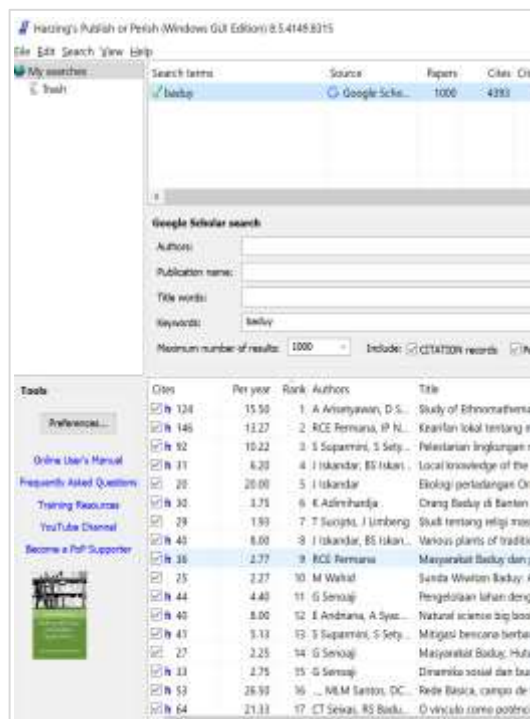


Figure 2. Searching for manuscripts via publish or perish

There are two articles that contain a symbolic interactionism approach and both are related to Baduy. Furthermore, the author conducted a limited review of specific literature related to Baduy to be more focused and selected as many as 50 articles purposively for then open coding of the methodology and techniques used in the research.

Result and discussion

Several approaches were used based on open coding which was carried out (figure 3), namely: 1) qualitative descriptive, 2) ethnographic, 3) exploratory descriptive, 4) case study, 5) phenomenological, 6) analytical descriptive, 7) anthropology, 8) others.

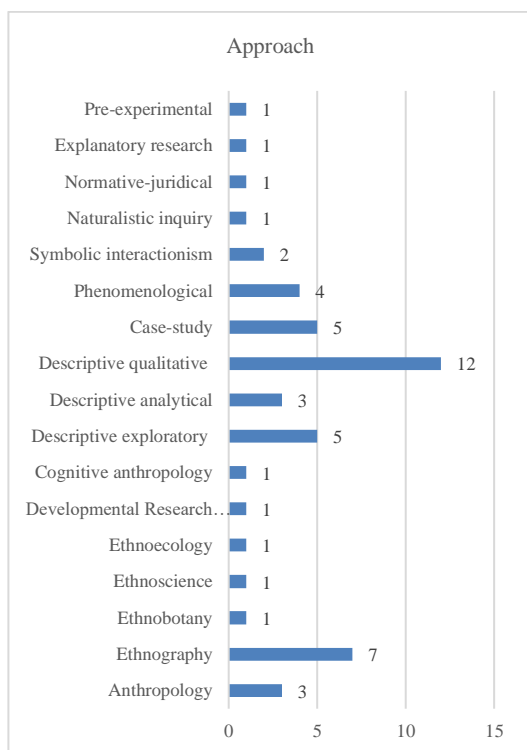


Figure 3. Open coding diagram of the approach used in vernacular cultural landscape research

Open coding was also carried out on the technique used in the study (figure 4). Several techniques used include: 1) observation, 2) interviews, 3) surveys, 4) literature studies, 5) in-depth interviews, 6) others.

Two studies using the symbolic interactionism approach were carried out by the same researcher (table 1). The first journal is entitled "Sunda Wiwitan: The Belief System of Baduy Indigenous Community, Banten, Indonesia" (AS et al. 2020) and the second is entitled "Da'wah Communication in the Sundawiwitan Community" (AS 2019).

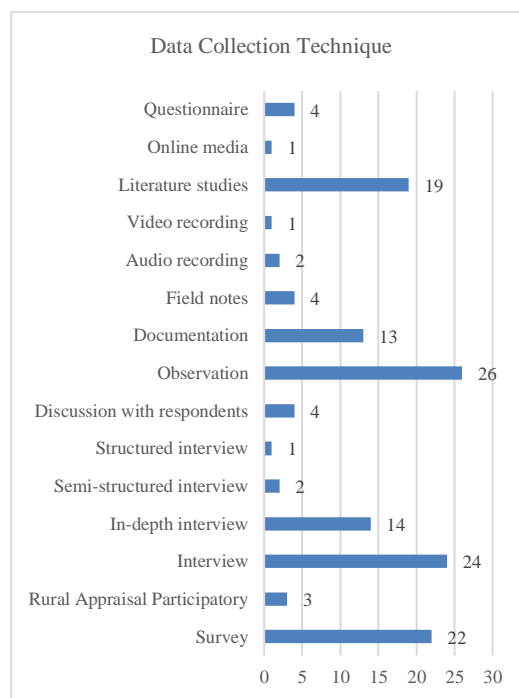


Figure 4. Open coding diagram of data collection techniques for vernacular cultural landscape research

Table 1. Identity of the respondents

	Case 1	Case 2
	Sunda Wiwitan: The belief system of Baduy indigenous community, Banten, Indonesia"	Da'wah communication in the Sunda Wiwitan community
Year	2020	2019
Researcher	Enjang AS, Mukhlis Aliyudin, Muhibudin Wijaya, Laksana Farid Soleh Nurdin, Sitta Resmiyanti, Muslimah Widodo Dwi Ismail, Azis	Enjang AS
Aim	Knowing the construction of the meaning of Sunda Wiwitan Religion in the Sundanese Baduy people	Analyzing and describing the Sundanese Wiwitan religion that is adhered to and da'wah communication among the Baduy Indigenous people
Research approach/methodology	Interpretive paradigm, with qualitative methods and symbolic interaction approach as an analytical tool	Herbert Blummer's Symbolic Interactionism which is derived in three dimensions, namely: Mind, self and society.

	Case 1	Case 2
Data collection technique	Participatory observation and in-depth interviews	Observations, interviews and documentation
Main symbol	Sunda Wiwitan	Sunda Wiwitan
Conclusion	Sunda Wiwitan has become the main symbol that reaches every side of life, and symbolizes the beliefs of the Bedouin vernacular community. This symbol is a reference for the community's paradigm, interpreting natural phenomena and determining people's behaviour. Traditional institutions and traditional ceremonies symbolize: (1) Understanding and appreciation of religion (beliefs) (2) Obedience and practice of daily life and (3) Symbolization and recognition	(1) The indigenous people of Baduy are a group of people who adhere to Sunda Wiwitan whose teachings are based on the Pikukuh Baduy or are called buyut karuhun (ancestral prohibitions). This belief becomes their characteristic as well as their identity so that it is referred to as the prototype of Sundanese Buhun or ancient Sundanese society; (2) Da'wah communication carried out by preachers in the Sundawiwitan community (Baduy Adat) in the form of bilisan da'wah which is more inclined to khitabah activities (lectures) using Sundanese language specifically for the local community, and the message conveyed is more focused on problems monotheism, issues of worship mahdah, and tasawuf.

Case 1 stated that *Sunda Wiwitan* is the highest main symbol in the Baduy indigenous people, which is inseparable from socio-cultural representation. This study concludes that *Sunda Wiwitan* has become the main symbol that collectively depicts the beliefs of the Baduy indigenous people, covering every element of life. This sign serves as a reference point for the

collective paradigm that the Baduy people use to understand natural events and guide their behaviour. Traditional institutions and traditional ceremonies symbolize: (1) Understanding and appreciation of beliefs; (2) Obedience and practice of daily life; and (3) The existence and acknowledgement of government and power outside the Baduy customary institutions (AS et al. 2020).

Collective representation, each individual's behaviour and beliefs, observances and daily practices conform to Mead's concept of the self as a social part, socialized and controlled. According to Mead, the human self is an unpredictable, impulsive part but also the voice of society within the individual, which is rooted in previous social experience and reflects the attitudes and perceptions of others (Jarvinen 2020).

For people who still adhere to Sunda Wiwitan, it can be said that their own interpretation chooses to be in accordance with the social voice of the people who still adhere to their ancestral beliefs.

Actions must be in accordance with the norms, rules, and lifestyle of the community and must not violate the applicable rules, otherwise one must be prepared for the consequences that will be obtained. We might be categorized as deviant according to Becker's theory, labelled or, according to Goffman's theory, stigmatized (Jarvinen 2020).

They are afraid to deviate from the teachings of their ancestors and do not want to get out of the voices of the social community for fear of being banished or ostracized. This phenomenon is in accordance with Goffman's stigma theory, namely that if an individual violates normative expectations related to certain categories or situations, he will be at risk of being shamed and labelled as deviant - in other words, he is at risk of being stigmatized (Goffman 1963).

An interesting phenomenon in case 2, "Da'wah Communication in the Sundawiwitan Community" shows a change in the religious order of the Baduy indigenous people, starting from the use of words or terms of Islamic teachings in daily life, to the conversion of religion from *sunda wiwitan* to Islam. Changing religions is not a problem, as long as they convert to Islam, both at the leadership level and down to the community level. This phenomenon is seen as an effect of da'wah activities carried out by preachers in the life of the Baduy people. Da'wah activities result in assimilation and even acculturation of Islamic culture with local culture

or customs. The appropriation of Islamic teachings in the Baduy community as manifested in cultural assimilation and acculturation does not happen easily considering that the Baduy people are known to strongly believe in ancestral traditions. The designation and use of words and terms in Islam and religious conversion are made possible by the communication methods applied by preachers who are directed at the right targets (AS 2019).

In this second manuscript, it is explained that what makes Islam acceptable to the Baduy community is a continuous process of interaction in accordance with the theory of symbolic interactionism, which is developed based on ideas about individuals and their relationship with society which are understood as interactions between individuals using symbols. Those who support symbolic interactionism want to know how people use symbols to convey their communication goals (Mulyana 2001). Furthermore, this theory is basically a theory about the self, developed by George Herbert Mead who sees self-concept as the result of social interaction with other people (Mulyana 2001). What also makes Islam acceptable is the existence of a general statement that is developing in society which says that: "Baduy people, especially outside Baduy, if you want to change your faith, don't embrace any religion except Islam" (AS 2019).

From these two studies, it is clear that the concept of the self conveyed by Mead, the self as the voice of society, and the self as individual voice (Jarvinen 2020). These two studies are also in accordance with Blummer's premise (Jarvinen 2020; Jarvinen and Mik-Meyer 2020), namely:

1. The first premise is that humans act towards something (physical, psychological and social) based on the meaning that the object has;
2. The second premise is that these meanings arise from and are constantly being re-created through human interaction;
3. The third premise is that at the individual level, meaning is filtered through a process of interpretation, not automatically accepting social definitions of reality.

The two cases illustrate different individual interpretations in choosing decisions due to symbolic interactionism. In the first case, his personal interpretation adheres to ancestral beliefs, and the second case illustrates that personal interpretation chooses a new belief (Islam)

because interaction with the new belief extends to his understanding of the self.

From the open coding of data collection techniques in vernacular culture research, the most frequently used are observation and interviews. The first case used participatory observation and in-depth interview techniques, while the second case used observation, interview and documentation techniques. Both data collection techniques are no different from other qualitative approaches, namely collecting data or information in locations commonly known as fieldwork (Wolcott 1999). Some of the field activities carried out can be in the form of 1) field observations or observations, 2) interviews or discussions, 3) the process of documentation (note-taking and recording). Observation or observation can be chosen 1) full involvement, which requires the researcher to actually join the group being observed, interested, and have the same feelings as the research subject, 2) Participant as observer, joining the group being studied while refraining from being too involved in the activities of the group under study and did not participate fully, 3) Observer as participant; ; approaching the group and explicitly introducing oneself as an observer, 4) Complete observer; being on location, watching, witnessing and documenting what is observed, but not part of it (Gold 1958).

An effective interview technique used to explore this research is "Field Research Interview", namely the act of asking, listening, showing interest, and recording carried out by researchers with other participants who can actively communicate subjective meanings through thoughts and her feelings. This type of interview is long, unstructured, open, and relaxed interview (Neuman 2013).

The Baduy Vernacular Cultural Landscape is formed from human activities in harmony with nature over a long period of time. According to Platcher and Rossler, traditional or vernacular community culture is the result of human efforts in harmony with nature, influenced by their environment, the combination of nature and human dynamism and contains knowledge about how to run social organizations and manage the physical space around them (Droste, Plachter, and Rössler 1995; Hamka 2017)

The cultural landscape can be recognized by its characters and components. McClelland mentions eleven cultural landscape characters consisting of A) Process consisting of: 1) Land

Use and Activities, 2) Spatial Organizational Patterns, 3) Responses to the natural environment, 4) Cultural traditions, and B) physical components consisting of: 5) circulation, 6) demarcation boundaries, 7) vegetation, 8) buildings, structures and objects, 9) clusters, 10) archaeological sites, and 11) small-scale elements (McClelland et al. 1999). While Melnick recognizes thirteen components of the cultural landscape which include: A) Context, consisting of: 1) Overall cultural landscape organization, 2) General land use categories, 3) Specific land use activities, B) Organization consisting of: 4) Relations the form of the building with the primary natural elements, 5) Network and circulation patterns, 6) Boundary control elements, 7) Site layout and C) Elements consisting of 8) Vegetation patterns related to land use, 9) Types and functions of buildings, 10) Construction materials and techniques, 11) Small-scale elements, 12) Cemeteries and other symbolic places, 13) Historical views and other perceptual qualities (Melnick 1983).

In observing the characters and components that make up the Baduy cultural landscape and the interviews that have been conducted, Baduy Dalam (the inner village) and Baduy Luar (the outer village) generally have similarities, although there are some differences that can be recognized immediately, especially with regard to their physical-spatial-architectural forms, including:

1. The contours of the land in Baduy Dalam may not be changed/levelled;
 2. Baduy Dalam has a clear village pattern; the *Puun* House (house belongs to traditional leader), *alun-alun* (village square), meeting hall and *lisung* (pestle and mortar) hut;
 3. Baduy Dalam house has only one door and no windows;
 4. Baduy Dalam construction may not use nails.
- Symbolic interactionism can be used to reveal phenomena that occur in Baduy including: 1) why the three characters of the Baduy Dalam are very strong and uniformly followed, 2) why the characters of Baduy Dalam are different from Baduy Luar.

Conclusion

The techniques used in the two cases that carry out the symbolic interactionism approach are

basically the same as qualitative research techniques in general, such as field observations, interviews and documentation. However, even though it is no different from other qualitative approaches, symbolic interactionism can effectively study life, social interaction and reveal meaningful symbols in certain environments, especially environments with strong cultural history and traditions. Symbolic interactionism is able to reveal the relationship between intangible symbols, rules, obedience and daily activities with something tangible such as the formation of spaces, buildings, circulation and others.

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Author(s) contribution

Irfan Sabarilah Hasim contributed to the research concepts preparation, methodologies, investigations, data analysis, visualization, articles drafting and revisions.

Iwan Sudradjat contribute to the research concepts preparation and literature reviews, data analysis, of article drafts preparation and validation.

Indah Widiastuti contribute to methodology, supervision, and validation.