

Religious-based Environmental Movement: Mosque as a Center of Environmental Awareness Initiatives in Code River Yogyakarta

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Abstract. This paper analyses the emerging role of mosque as a new public space for catalyzing environmental movement. Beyond the environmental initiatives spearheaded by governmental bodies, NGOs, environmental activists, and concerned communities, mosque situated along the banks of the Code River have emerged as a significant local institution actively engaged in fostering environmental consciousness and contributing to river restoration efforts. In addition to its traditional role in fostering religious devotion, the mosque is increasingly recognized for its capacity to enhance awareness of the surrounding environment. This research adopts a qualitative approach with a focus on a case study. Data collection was facilitated through in-depth interviews, observational methods, and documentation studies. Drawing upon McCarthy & Zald's Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT), this study reveals that mosques have evolved into valuable resources for riverbank residents, serving as platforms to mobilize communities towards fostering environmental awareness. This mobilization is achieved through various activities including awareness campaigns, strategic planning, and the expansion of networks aimed at fostering environmental management.

1 Introduction

The restoration of the Code River commenced in 1984, spearheaded by Romo Mangun Widjaya, a religious figure, social activist, and architect based in Yogyakarta. This initiative was prompted by common urban challenges, such as population density and the scarcity of residential land, which led to the proliferation of illegal settlements along riverbanks. Consequently, these settlements contributed to river pollution through the careless disposal of household waste, causing annual flooding issues during the rainy season. Consequently, rivers became focal points for environmental and health hazards [1,2]

Romo Mangun's cultural movement introduced a paradigm shift in perceiving rivers, transitioning from viewing them as mere "backyards" to recognizing them as "front yards." Formerly, the concept of the River as Backyard portrayed rivers as spaces behind houses where waste could be conveniently hidden, leading to unrestrained dumping by residents and transforming rivers into massive sources of rubbish. Conversely, the River as Front Yard

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ideology challenges this notion by positioning rivers as the forefront of households. This redefinition leads residents to re-imagine the river as an extension of their homes' frontage, necessitating cleanliness and aesthetic appeal. Consequently, the river ceases to serve as an illegal dumping ground for environmental waste, as residents are compelled to maintain its clean condition [3].

Despite the efforts initiated by Romo Mangun's cultural movement, the residents of Code River continue to struggle with persistent environmental challenges. According to Yossi and Sajor [4], the issue of river pollution in the vicinity of Code River remains unresolved, even a decade after the cultural movement's inception. This stagnation can be attributed to the interventions implemented throughout the 1990s, which followed to a top-down development approach arranged by the local government. Under this framework, programs were initiated solely by the government, with minimal input from citizens in decision-making processes. Consequently, the programs lacked in addressing the ongoing issues afflicting Code River, as they failed to align with the community's needs and expectations, perpetuating the cycle of environmental degradation in the area.

Yossi and Sajor [4] underscore the core issue of river pollution in Code River, assigning it to the behavior of residents along the riverbanks who persist in disposing solid and liquid waste into the river. They argue that the key to addressing this issue lies in provoking behavioral change and fostering community-driven initiatives for change. Particularly, in the early 2000s, foreign institutions intervened, shifting the focus towards empowering local residents to take charge of the development and preservation of the Code River environment. This transfer of responsibility led to increased engagement and participation of residents in managing their surroundings. Over time, collaborative efforts involving various stakeholders have been encouraged to promote self-help and community-driven initiatives. Consequently, a multitude of river restoration movements have emerged, rooted in local community initiatives. This shift towards grassroots involvement highlights the importance of empowering residents to take ownership of their environment and actively contribute to its preservation and improvement.

This article analyses the environmental movement focused on river restoration, leveraging religious public spaces, particularly a mosque, as an organizing hub. The mosque has emerged as a novel venue for communities residing along the banks of the Code River to coordinate and execute awareness campaigns aimed at mitigating further damage to the river. Despite numerous studies examining the Code River in Yogyakarta, prior research has predominantly focused on distinct facets of the river phenomenon, including river pollution and water quality [5,6,7], architecture and settlements surrounding rivers [8], and efforts to mitigate river-related disasters [2,9,14,15]. However, there has been a lack of studies investigating the role of religious institutions, such as mosques, as platforms for mobilizing environmental movements.

This study aims to address this gap by exploring the extent to which mosques, as communal spaces, mobilize citizens in environmental activism, particularly concerning the river environment in Code River, Yogyakarta. By analyzing the involvement of mosques in fostering environmental awareness and action, this research seeks to highlight the significance of religious institutions in driving grassroots environmental initiatives within the community.

2 Research method

This research adopts a qualitative approach employing a case study methodology. Data collection is facilitated through in-depth interviews and observations involving key actors engaged in the river restoration environmental movement, utilizing mosques as focal points within the community. The study is conducted in Jetisharjo Village, Code River, Yogyakarta,

where the mosque serves as a central hub for environmental mobilization and awareness initiatives. The selection of informants follows a purposive sampling method, targeting individuals directly involved in mosque activities. This includes mosque administrators, community leaders, and young activists engaged in mosque-led environmental activities. By engaging with these relevant stakeholders, the research aims to capture comprehensive insights into the role of mosques as catalysts for environmental activism within the local context.

3 Results and discussion

The restoration efforts of the Code River are currently underway through collaborative endeavors involving residents, academics, social activists, and governmental agencies. This collaborative approach has stimulated the emergence of numerous programs initiated by local communities, with key stakeholders serving as the driving force behind these initiatives. Since 2020, various river restoration movements have surfaced to address the challenges facing the Code River and to promote awareness of clean river management practices. Among these movements are the North Code Community Communication Forum (FMCU), Code Lover Community (KOMPAC), and Code Love Movement (GCC). These grassroots initiatives aim to mobilize community members to actively participate in the restoration and preservation of the Code River. In response to the proliferation of community-based observer and river conservation movements, the Yogyakarta City Government has established the *Pemerti Kali Code* forum. This platform serves as a communication channel between the government, residents, and community organizations dedicated to the welfare of the Code River [1,2].



Fig. 1. A map of the Code River area in Yogyakarta that includes the As Salaam Mosque (Source: [16])

The Pemerti Kali Code forum has effectively facilitated collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including governmental agencies, community groups, and universities, to drive river management efforts and innovations forward. These efforts are concentrated on three main aspects: hydrological, ecological, and morphological. Ecological initiatives underscore the significance of river management by emphasizing the necessity of cleansing rivers from various forms of waste. This involves implementing strategies to remove pollutants and

restore the natural balance of river ecosystems. Furthermore, the focus on maintaining and enhancing hydrology and morphology is exemplified by endeavors aimed at establishing green spaces along riverbanks. These green spaces not only contribute to the beautification of the river surroundings but also play a vital role in preserving ecological balance and mitigating the impact of urbanization on river systems. Additionally, the construction of a communal Liquid Waste Disposal Installation demonstrates a commitment to improving sanitation practices and addressing the issue of waste management effectively. By providing a centralized facility for liquid waste disposal, this initiative helps minimize pollution and safeguard the environmental integrity of the Code River [1].

In practice, numerous river management strategies are devised and ratified during community forums hosted at mosques. Within the Code River community, the mosque serves as a central gathering place where all community activities converge. Beyond its religious function, the mosque has been strategically leveraged for mobilization campaigns and environmental awareness initiatives, particularly those pertaining to effective river management. This study examines the multifaceted involvement of a mosque in river restoration, encompassing three primary dimensions: raising awareness, orchestrating action plans, and fostering network expansion. Fig. 1 is the map of Code River area in Yogyakarta that includes the As Salaam Mosque.

3.1 Mosque as a Hub for River Restoration Awareness and Action Planning

A fundamental aspect of managing the Code River revolves around fostering awareness among residents regarding the importance of maintaining clean riverbanks and refraining from littering. Unfortunately, the Code River ranks among the most polluted rivers, marked by substantial accumulations of debris, as reported by the Yogyakarta City Environmental Service (DLH) [10]. An illustrative example of community-driven cleanup efforts occurred during a collaborative effort involving the Yogyakarta City Environmental Service (DLH), the Indonesian National Army (TNI), local residents, and students. Remarkably, within an about two-hour cleanup session focused on a specific segment of the Code River, four tons of waste were collected. This haul comprised 40 kg of organic waste, 2.7 tons of residual waste, and 1 ton of recyclable materials. Such endeavors underscore the community's commitment to mitigating river pollution and restoring the vitality of the Code River ecosystem [11].

This observation underscores the persistent challenges in effectively managing the environment around the Code River despite longstanding efforts to promote environmental stewardship. Zunariyah [1] argues that the efficacy of awareness strategies is compromised by the limited engagement of key stakeholders within the local community. Formal interventions alone are insufficient, necessitating supplementary informal processes to foster a shared perspective among community members. She emphasizes the importance of leveraging informal networks, such as friendship ties and local institutions, to complement formal initiatives and encourage a collective commitment to environmental conservation.

The mosque, as a vital local institution within the Kali Code community, plays a central role in mobilizing and raising awareness for river restoration efforts. Various strategies are employed to foster awareness through the mosque, including: 1) Leveraging the Jetisharjo mosque's *takmir* (administrator), 2) Engaging the youth movement within the mosque, 3) Utilizing the mosque as a venue for river school activities.

The first strategy involves engaging the mosque *takmir*, who also holds the position of head of the RT (Rukun Tetangga-Neighborhood Association). This key figure plays a crucial role in raising awareness about river issues within the local community. Public figures, such as mosque *takmir*s and RT heads, hold significant influence and credibility among community members, making them trusted sources of information and guidance.

Collaborating with community leaders who also serve as mosque takmir proves to be strategically important in these efforts. The mosque takmir serves as a vital link between environmental management initiatives and the community as the executors. They act as a bridge, effectively communicating program objectives and facilitating community participation in river restoration activities.

Secondly, the youth of the mosque in Jetisharjo village have been actively involved in river cleaning activities even prior to the formation of the river community. The mosque serves as a hub for coordinating these youth, facilitating the planning, organization, and coordination of river restoration actions within their neighborhood. Additionally, the mosque serves as a central point for information exchange and promotion regarding river restoration efforts among the youth, fostering communication both within their community and with neighboring areas.

Thirdly, the mosque serves as a crucial point for river restoration awareness, facilitating not only knowledge exchange among the youth but also across generations. The mosque takes on the role of coordinating *Sekolah Sungai* (river school) activities (Fig. 2.), a collaborative effort involving community leaders—specifically, the mosque takmir—mosque youth, and external social activists. *Sekolah Sungai* represents a holistic approach aimed at fostering a deeper understanding of rivers, their dynamics, and collective actions for restoration. This knowledge dissemination process occurs during TPA (Taman Pendidikan Al-Quran/Al-Qur'an Education Park) sessions, attended by children and teenagers. *Sekolah Sungai* curriculum integrates teachings from Islamic principles on cleanliness and environmental preservation, combined by insights drawn from local community wisdom. Through these sessions, participants are not only equipped with religious teachings but also empowered with practical knowledge and cultural insights essential for effective river management.



Fig. 2. Sekolah Sungai at As Salaam Mosque Code River (Source: [17])

3.2 Mosque as a Hub for River Restoration Networking

In addition to serving as a pivotal point for raising awareness about river restoration, the mosque also facilitates the formation of network connections among river activists. The mosque in Jetisharjo, Kali Code, has taken the initiative to establish networking opportunities among mosque administrators, integrating environmental awareness materials into congregational activities, particularly during TPA sessions attended by children and

teenagers. This network serves as a crucial mechanism for expanding outreach to various institutions, so increasing the impact of river restoration efforts.

Moreover, through this network, knowledge exchange, discussions on river issues, and necessary actions are disseminated more widely, reaching a broader audience. It is hoped that this intensive effort will foster a shared perspective on river restoration among the wider public. Subsequently, this initiative was formalized through the establishment of the Code Mosque Friendship Forum (FSMC), aimed at bridging river community activities with mosque congregations along the Code River.

3.3 Mosque as an Agent of Resource Mobilization

Resource mobilization theory presents an alternative lens for understanding social movements [12]. This theory emphasizes the significance of the capabilities and resources available to marginalized groups in shaping the development and outcomes of their social mobilization efforts. Central to this theory is the notion that the success of a social movement depends on its access to and utilization of resources [13]. In the context of the social movements in Code River, Yogyakarta, mosques and community leaders—specifically mosque takmirs and mosque youth—emerge as critical resources for the residents of Code River. The mosque and its leadership serve as platforms for voicing residents' criticisms and ideas within the community, fostering the emergence of patterns of environmental education and social mobilization. Through these channels, mosques effectively mobilize community members, channeling their energies towards collective action and advocacy for environmental causes.

The success of the environmental awareness social movement in Code River is intricately linked to the community members' awareness of their available resources. Community leaders, particularly mosque takmirs and mosque institutions within the Muslim community, play a pivotal role as communication facilitators between residents and communal spaces where discussions can occur. This significance is further underscored by the lack of urban shared spaces, making mosques the primary venue for public gatherings and dialogue. In this context, mosques serve as crucial hubs for community engagement and collaboration.

The emergence of river school activism, knowledge exchange initiatives, youth mosque movements, and networking initiatives stemming from mosques highlights the community's ability at optimizing their resources to mobilize towards a common goal—river restoration. By effectively enhancing the resources at their disposal and utilizing mosques as central platforms for communication and coordination, the community demonstrates its ability to organize and advocate for environmental causes, ultimately contributing to the success of the social movement focused on river restoration in Code River.

4 Conclusion and recommendation

Environmental restoration efforts necessitate the involvement of diverse stakeholders, including both formal endeavors spearheaded by state institutions and informal processes facilitated by key actors and local institutions. In the effort to restore the Code River in Yogyakarta, mosques play as a pivotal role in mobilizing communities, raising awareness, facilitating action planning, and establishing networks of river activists. Transforming beyond mere places of worship, mosques now play a more humanistic role in addressing community issues, particularly environmental conservation along the banks of the Code River in Yogyakarta. It is expected that mosques, as crucial public spaces within communities, can serve as pioneering centers for developing programs, activities, and fostering religious-environmental values that are deeply rooted and have far-reaching impacts on the Code River community and beyond. By using their influence and outreach,

mosques have the potential to stimulate widespread community involvement and collective action, thus fostering a culture of environmental management and sustainable development along riverbanks throughout Indonesia.

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