



PORTRAIT OF URBAN IDENTITY IN DOCUMENTARY TRACING OF THE ROOTS

SYNOPSIS

The documentary "Tracing of The Roots" is a documentary that raises the issue of identity through autoethnographics methods. This film is based on empirical experiences as with parents from mixed race marriage. The identity as an urban, born and raised in Jakarta is conveyed through a narrative by the filmmaker. Growing up in big city such as Jakarta makes the director feel distant from the traditions of both parents. Inter-ethnic or ethnic marriages that happens in Indonesia are often not accompanied by a thorough introduction to the traditions from their origins or ancestors. Most parents who raise children in the big city prefer to adapting urban values within the family. Life in Jakarta makes children with parents of two different ethnicities distanced from traditional value.



METHODS

The documentary uses a combination of autoethnography and participatory documentary approaches.

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

A reflective, personal method where the filmmaker (author) explores their identity through direct engagement with their cultural background. It involves self narrative, memory, emotion, and empirical experience.

PARTICIPATORY DOCUMENTARY

The filmmaker actively engages as both subject and director, interacting with family members, conducting interviews, and participating in the narrative rather than observing from a distance.



Caption

THREE GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

PALANGKARAYA (Mother's Hometown)

Activities:
Visiting family, family history through relatives, 40-day grandmother death memorial.

LARANTUKA (Father's Hometown)

Activities:
Learning family history through relatives.

SAVU ISLAND (Grandfather's Hometown)

Activities:
An unplanned detour to trace the grandfather's roots and ancestral graves.

DOCUMENTARY STRUCTURE

Tracing of the Roots Documentary is structured into multiple sequences using three visual elements :



1 GRAPHICS:
Family photos, visual texts
for exposition



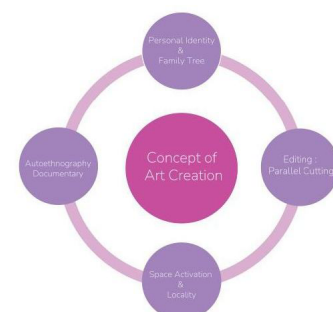
2 PEOPLE TALKING:
Conversations with relatives.



3 ACTION FOOTAGES:
Daily activities like cooking,
visiting markets, and rituals.

CREATIVE PROCESS

The documentary "Tracing of The Roots" explores the filmmaker's personal identity as an urban child reconnecting with his Dayak and Sabu heritage. Through an autoethnographic approach, it captures daily life, family spaces, and local cuisines in both ancestral homelands. Using Parallel Cutting, the film juxtaposes these cultures, revealing both differences and surprising similarities that shape the director's sense of self.



Documentary Tracing of The Roots

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Tracing of The Roots is a participatory documentary that explores the cultural identity of urban teenager whose parents come from different ethnic backgrounds. Many of them, including filmmaker grow up in cities like Jakarta without understanding of their parents' cultural roots. This film is based on the filmmaker's personal experience of feeling distant from both traditions and places of origin. Using autoethnography, a method that highlights personal experience and reflection, the filmmaker overviews her identity by visiting her parents' hometowns: Palangkaraya in Central Borneo and Larantuka, East Nusa Tenggara. These journeys help her reconnect with extended family and explore traditional values still practices in those regions. The film presents cultural experiences that are rarely found in urban settings, such as traditional food, the ways of greeting and the big family traditions. At the same time, it also uncovers similarities between the Dayak and Flores tribes—especially how water plays a vital role in daily life, as both places are surrounded by rivers and the sea. This documentary shows how personal narrative and participatory documentary techniques and autoethnographic methods can be used to explore questions of cultural identity. The documentary used autoethnography, a qualitative research method that combines personal narrative with cultural analysis to examine how individual experiences reflect broader social or cultural meanings. In this creative process, autoethnography guided the filmmaker to reflect critically on her memories, emotions, and identity while documenting her journey. Voice-over narration, recorded conversations with family, and mixed footages from field visits were used to express these reflections visually and emotionally.

Sustainable Development Goal(s) Relevancy

Goal 15: Life on Land

References

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Short Biography

Natalia Depita is a film lecturer and independent filmmaker who has been teaching at Universitas Multimedia Nusantara since 2016. Her scientific interests focus on cultural identity studies, documentary, and film production. She has directed documentary films such as *Lengger Lanang* (2019) and *Akar Manusia Urban* (2021), as well as short fiction film *Balada Dangdut* (2014). Her professional experience also includes the production of feature films such as *Laut Bercerita* (2017) and *Surga di Bawah Langit* (2020). In the academic field, Natalia actively writes and presents papers, including on the organizational structure of the student film festival (UCIFEST), the characteristics of local film festivals, and new cinematic approaches through interactive films and virtual reality. Through her creative and cultural research she continues to develop an interdisciplinary approach to film education in Indonesia.



Title

Documentary Tracing of The Roots

Production Process Years

2020-2021

Publication Year

2021

Publication Details

- Pameran Arsip Merekam Kota (Memori, Ruang dan Imajinasi) by Komunitas Film Kupang, Kupang, Nusa Tenggara Timur Indonesia (2022).
- Flobamora Film Festival, Kupang, Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia (2022)
- Festival Film Budaya Nusantara, Jakarta, Indonesia (2021)
- Parade Film NTT, Kupang, Nusa Tenggara Timur Indonesia (2021)

Publication Media

Video

Recognition

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Grants

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Additional

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