

DYNAMICS OF DIVERSITY OF NATURAL AND SOCIAL APPEARANCES OF INDONESIA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF GEOGRAPHY AND SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the dynamics of Indonesia's natural and social landscape diversity from geographical and societal perspectives. Geographically, Indonesia possesses complex landforms, including mountainous regions, lowlands, coastal areas, and archipelagic zones, which strongly influence social, economic, and cultural life. This research adopts a qualitative approach through library research, drawing data from academic books, scholarly journals, and relevant documents in geography and social sciences. The analysis is conducted descriptively using the theoretical frameworks of environmental determinism, possibilism, human-environment interaction, and constructivism. The findings reveal that natural conditions significantly shape livelihood patterns, settlement systems, and social structures. However, Indonesian society demonstrates strong adaptive capacity in managing and utilizing the environment. The reciprocal interaction between humans and nature creates dynamic spatial processes and generates social and environmental challenges. Therefore, an integrative understanding of natural and social diversity is essential for advancing geographical studies and contextual learning.

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INTRODUCTION

The diversity of natural and social features is a fundamental characteristic of Indonesia's territory that cannot be separated from the study of geography. From a geographical perspective, space is understood as the result of the interaction between physical elements and human activities that occur dynamically over time (Vygotsky, 1978). Indonesia, as an archipelagic country located in the tropics, located at the confluence of the world's tectonic plates, and with variations in relief and climate, presents a very high complexity of natural features (Ricklefs, 1993). This variation forms patterns of social life of communities that differ between regions, both in aspects of livelihoods, settlement systems, social structures, and local culture (Bintarto & Hadisumarno, 1991).

Theoretically, the relationship between the physical environment and human life has long been a concern in geography. The environmental determinism approach explains that natural conditions have a strong influence on human behavior and lifestyles (Semple, 1911). Although this approach was later criticized for its tendency to position humans as passive objects, the idea that nature influences social activity remains relevant in contemporary geographical studies. Furthermore, the development of possibilism theory emphasizes that humans have the ability to adapt, choose, and manage their environment according to their needs and technological developments (INDONESIA, 2006). In the Indonesian context, society is not only influenced by geographical conditions but also actively shapes its living space through various social, economic, and cultural activities.

Furthermore, the theory of human-environment interaction emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between humans and nature. According to this view, the physical environment influences social life, while human activities also impact environmental change, so that space is understood as the result of dynamic and ongoing interactions (Gregory et al., 2011). In the reality of Indonesian society, this reciprocal relationship is evident in various phenomena, such as changes in land use, exploitation of natural resources, urbanization, and social dynamics in coastal, mountainous, and urban areas (Ricklefs, 1993). These changes not only impact the physical condition of the region but also give rise to social problems, such as development inequality, resource conflicts, and environmental degradation that affect the sustainability of community life (Bintarto & Hadisumarno, 1991).

In a social context, the diversity of natural features contributes to the socio-cultural diversity of Indonesian society. Coastal communities, for example, have different lifestyles from those of inland or mountainous communities, both in terms of economic systems, cultural values, and patterns of social interaction (Vidal de la Blache, 1926). This diversity is essentially a social wealth that reflects a society's ability to adapt to its environment. However, in the development of modern society, the dynamics of this diversity are often faced with the challenges of globalization, modernization, and rapid social change, potentially eroding local wisdom and disrupting the balance of human relations with their environment (Vygotsky, 1978).

In the realm of education and academic studies, particularly geography and social sciences, the diversity of Indonesia's natural and social features should ideally be understood integratively. Geography learning not only aims to introduce the physical forms of the region, but also to develop students' understanding of the relationship between space, the environment, and the social life of society (Gregory et al., 2011). Constructivist theory, as proposed by Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, emphasizes that knowledge is built through active learning experiences and interactions with the social and cultural environment (Ricklefs, 1993). Therefore, geography learning that links natural diversity with the social realities of society will be more meaningful and contextual, because it allows students to build understanding based on experience and reflection on real phenomena around them (Hasan, 2012).

However, based on a review of various literature and learning practices, several fundamental problems remain. First, studies of the diversity of Indonesia's natural and social features are often dichotomously separated into physical and social aspects. Natural features are studied solely as geographical features, while social aspects are understood as stand-alone phenomena without in-depth analysis of their relationship (Vygotsky, 1978). Second, in the educational context, geography learning

still tends to be oriented towards mastering concepts and memorizing facts, thus under-motivating students to critically and reflectively understand the dynamics of space and society (Hasan, 2012).

Third, there is still limited research that specifically examines the dynamics of Indonesia's diverse natural and social features using an integrative approach that links geographic theory, social realities, and their implications for education. Several studies tend to highlight either the physical environment or the social environment separately, without comprehensively discussing how the interaction of the two shapes the dynamics of Indonesian society amidst the challenges of global change in 1982 (Gregory et al., 2011). This condition indicates the existence of research gap in geographical studies and geographical education, particularly regarding the need for a holistic understanding of space as a result of the interaction between natural elements and human social activities (Bednarz et al., 2013).

Based on the above explanation, it can be identified that the main problem lies in the suboptimal integrative understanding of the relationship between the diversity of natural features and the social dynamics of Indonesian society, both in academic studies and in learning practices. Therefore, research on the dynamics of the diversity of natural and social features in Indonesia from a geographical and societal perspective is important to conduct. This research is expected to fill the existing research gap by presenting a comprehensive, contextual, and relevant analysis, while also providing theoretical and practical contributions to the development of geographical science and learning oriented towards spatial, social, and environmental awareness (Bloom et al., 1956).

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a library research approach. The qualitative approach was chosen because the research aims to gain a deep understanding of the dynamics of Indonesia's diverse natural and social features and their interrelationships from both geographical and societal perspectives.

The research data is sourced from relevant literature, including geography and social science textbooks, scientific journal articles, and official documents discussing Indonesia's geographic conditions, social dynamics, and the relationship between humans and the environment. Data collection was conducted using documentation techniques, namely by identifying, selecting, and reviewing written sources relevant to the research focus.

Data analysis was conducted descriptively and qualitatively, interpreting the data based on geographical and social theoretical frameworks, particularly human-environment interaction theory. Data validity was maintained through source triangulation, which involves comparing information from various references to obtain a comprehensive and academically sound understanding.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Diversity of Natural Appearances and Social Life Patterns of the Community

The study's findings indicate that Indonesia's diverse natural features are closely linked to its social patterns. Indonesia's diverse landscape, comprising mountainous, lowland, coastal, and island regions, creates a variety of physical environmental conditions that influence human activity. Communities living in mountainous areas generally rely on dryland agriculture and plantations for their livelihoods, with settlements spread out following the contours of the area. Meanwhile, coastal communities tend to develop livelihoods in the fisheries and marine sectors, and have settlement patterns that extend along the coastline.

These findings reinforce the environmental determinism view, which states that natural conditions influence the formation of patterns of economic and social activity in a society. The physical environment is the primary factor that both limits and directs how humans meet their needs. Thus, Indonesia's diverse natural features play a significant role in shaping the socio-cultural diversity of communities across its various regions.

Adaptation and Active Role of the Community in the Environment

Although natural conditions have a strong influence, studies also show that Indonesians are not passive in their dealings with their environment. Various forms of adaptation and innovation are implemented to overcome geographical limitations. For example, communities in mountainous areas develop terracing systems to reduce erosion and increase agricultural productivity, while coastal communities utilize modern fishing technology to increase catches.

This finding aligns with the theory of possibilism, which asserts that the environment provides opportunities and constraints, but humans have the freedom to choose and manage that environment according to their needs and technological developments. In this context, Indonesian society demonstrates a high level of adaptability to natural conditions, thus creating a dynamic social and economic system.

Reciprocal Interaction between Humans and the Environment

The research also reveals a reciprocal relationship between humans and the environment. Human activities, such as urbanization, land conversion, and natural resource exploitation, are not only influenced by geographic conditions but also directly impact environmental change. These changes are evident in the increase in urban settlements, the reduction in agricultural land, and environmental degradation in several regions.

This phenomenon demonstrates that geographic space is the result of ongoing interactions between physical elements and human social activities. This interaction can have positive impacts in the form of increased well-being, but it also has the potential to give rise to social and environmental problems, such as development inequality, resource conflicts, and environmental degradation. Therefore, sustainable spatial management is a crucial requirement in addressing the dynamics of development.

Implications of Natural and Social Diversity in Geography Education

From an educational perspective, the results of this study emphasize the importance of an integrative understanding of the diversity of natural features and the social dynamics of society. Geography learning that solely emphasizes memorizing physical features without connecting them to social realities will be less meaningful for students. The constructivist approach emphasizes that knowledge is built through active learning experiences and interactions with the environment.

By linking geographical conditions to social life, students can develop spatial awareness, critical thinking skills, and environmental and social awareness. Therefore, contextual and reflective geography learning is crucial for developing a holistic understanding of Indonesian space and society.

Synthesis of Theoretical Approaches

Based on the discussion, it can be concluded that the dynamics of Indonesia's diverse natural and social features are best understood through an integrative approach. Environmental determinism explains the influence of natural conditions on human life, possibilism emphasizes the active role of humans in utilizing the environment, while human-environment interactionism highlights the reciprocal relationship between the two. A constructivist approach to education reinforces the importance of a contextual understanding of these phenomena.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that the dynamics of the diversity of natural and social features in Indonesia are complex and interconnected phenomena between the physical elements of the region and the social activities of the community. The diversity of natural features such as mountains, lowlands, coastal areas, and islands form different patterns of social adaptation, reflected in the variety of livelihoods, settlement patterns, and social and cultural structures of the community. However, Indonesian society is not passive in facing natural conditions, but rather has the ability to adapt, choose, and manage its environment according to needs and technological developments.

This study demonstrates that the relationship between humans and the environment is best understood through an integrative approach that combines environmental determinism, possibilism, and human-environment interactionism. Natural conditions provide limitations and opportunities, while humans actively shape and transform their living spaces. This reciprocal interaction gives rise to ever-evolving social and spatial dynamics, both in the form of changes in spatial use and the emergence of social and environmental challenges that require sustainable management.

In the context of education, particularly geography learning, this research confirms that Indonesia's diverse natural and social features have strategic educational value. Understanding geographic and social phenomena studied contextually and reflectively can enhance students' spatial awareness, critical thinking skills, and social and environmental awareness. A constructivist approach is relevant for building this understanding because it allows students to connect knowledge to the realities of life in the surrounding community.

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