

Activist Cosmopolitanism in Taring Padi's Art: Fostering Cosmopolitan Solidarity for Human Security in Indonesia

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Abstract

This paper seeks to examine the cosmopolitan solidarity fostered by the artist collective Taring Padi through their art. The group creates artworks that highlight human security issues across Indonesia, showcasing the works both domestically and internationally to raise awareness among global audiences and cultivate a sense of cosmopolitan solidarity aimed at addressing these issues for the benefit of humanity. This study, therefore, aims to analyze how Taring Padi establishes this solidarity by employing cosmopolitanism theory and utilizing a qualitative research method, with data gathered from observation, interviews, and literature review. This paper found that Taring Padi establishes cosmopolitan solidarity by focusing on three fundamental human security issues: the lack of freedom from want, freedom from fear, and freedom from indignity. The group illustrates the absence of these three freedoms in their artworks and invites audiences, regardless of nationality and geographic boundaries, to unite in addressing these human security issues and advocating for the victims, thereby embodying cosmopolitan solidarity. This research contributes to the existing literature on the power of art in international politics and underscores the importance of recognizing non-state actors, such as artists, in the realm of global politics.

1. INTRODUCTION

Existing scholarship demonstrates an ongoing theoretical debate about the role of art in political protest. Some scholars argue that art can serve as a medium of political discourse and resistance. For example, Vid Simoniti [1] explains that artistic practices provide epistemic resources that facilitate audiences to reinterpret political realities and challenge dominant ideologies. In this sense, art enables people to understand political issues differently from conventional rational argument. Art can expose aspects of political reality that may be overlooked. However, some other scholars express doubt and question the extent of art's political impact. For example, Jacqueline Adams [2] argues that when protest

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art becomes commodified, it risks losing its radical message and becomes more symbolic than politically effective. Adams finds that protest artworks initially portrayed poverty, repression, and political violence, but later shifted toward neutral or everyday themes such as markets, landscapes, and family life. This change illustrates how political art can gradually lose its critical and denunciatory character. Art may lose its political impact over time because of various factors, such as market pressure, self-censorship, and changing political environments.

Despite the existing theoretical debate on the role of protest art, art provides a platform to address and raise social and political issues, such as human rights abuses, environmental degradation, and social injustices. Dewald [3] discusses the intersection of arts and social justice, emphasizing the role of artistic expression in advocating for marginalized communities and addressing systemic injustice. A notable example of this intersection occurred during the 2012 exhibition "*Women Hold Up Half the Sky*" in California, which featured various artworks celebrating women's resilience against oppression. One piece depicted a Pakistani domestic violence survivor who, through her embroidery business, was able to support over thirty families in her village. Artists use art to challenge prevailing political narratives and ideologies, offering alternative perspectives that provoke thoughts and discussions. Art has the capacity to inspire social movements and activism, mobilizing individuals and communities to advocate for change. Artistic expressions, such as murals, installations, and performances, can act as potent forms of protests, conveying messages that resonate with the public and garner support. The significant role of art in motivating activism and social movements has been examined by some scholars. Monk et al. [4], for example, discuss various community engagement initiatives that use art as a form of activism, highlighting examples of how art has been utilized to enhance community participation and inspire social transformation.

In Indonesian art scene, Taring Padi has made a name for itself for using art to inspire activism and address social and political injustices across the archipelago. Known for its critical stance on social, economic, and political issues, the group expresses its activism through a variety of mediums, including paintings, installations, and art performances. Taring Padi blends art with activism, using its works to advocate for marginalized communities and criticize corrupt authorities for perpetuating social and political injustices. For example, "*People's Justice*", Taring Padi's giant banner that the group showcased in the world-renowned art exhibition Documenta Fifteen in Germany in 2022, raises the social and political injustice during President Soeharto's authoritarian New Order regime. The group made the banner in 2002 in Yogyakarta, to slam the dictator president, highlighting how capitalism, imperialism, and social inequality ruined the country and suffered the people under his leadership. *People's Justice* depicted figures resisting exploitation and demanding justice. Through symbolic imagery, the banner unveils the intricate power dynamics behind the regime's human rights abuses and violations, including the mass killing of approximately 500,000 suspected communists in 1965 [5].

Scholars have examined Taring Padi's artworks in the context of their socio-political activism. Hall [6] analyzed Taring Padi's posters and murals, emphasizing their use of accessible materials to engage the public on political and environmental issues in Indonesia. Heron & Kim [7] also studied Taring Padi's activism, focusing on how the group turns commentaries on social justice into symbolism in its works of art. They explored the group's creative process and political orientation to understand the meaning of its works, including *People's Justice*. This work sparked controversy during its exhibition in Documenta Fifteen in Germany because it raised the eyebrows of the German government for the commentaries that the group intended to convey. Ulung [8] spotlighted *People's Justice* in his research, focusing on the motivations behind showcasing the banner in Documenta Fifteen. He discussed the representation of past human rights violations, such as torture, genocide, and

forced disappearance, which Taring Padi sought to communicate to its audience in Germany through People's Justice.

Existing studies mainly focus on the artistic processes behind the creation of the works and the controversies surrounding them. They have not connected the visual elements of the artworks to cosmopolitan ethics or human security theory. This study aims to address this gap by examining Taring Padi's works from a human security perspective. Although previous research recognizes the group's engagement with social and political issues, it has not specifically analyzed how their artworks reveal the lack of human security in Indonesia. Therefore, this study asks: "Why does Taring Padi highlight human security issues in Indonesia through art?"

The findings show that Taring Padi uses art to expose human security problems in order to build cosmopolitan solidarity. The group seeks to attract international attention to human security issues in Indonesia that stem from the lack of three basic freedoms: freedom from want, freedom from fear, and freedom from indignity. Through symbols and visual messages, the group raises global awareness, supports victims, and criticizes those seen as responsible, such as authoritarian leaders and corrupt military figures. This approach reflects cosmopolitan values. The novelty of this research lies in examining the relationship between cosmopolitan principles and the human security concerns highlighted in the group's art. This contribution broadens understanding of how non-state actors can influence international politics through artistic expression.

Analyzing the absence of these three freedoms in the artworks of Taring Padi is also theoretically important because it demonstrates how art can be used to raise human security issues and promote cosmopolitan solidarity. The persistence of restricted basic freedoms highlighted in this study challenges assumptions that global norms promoting democracy and human rights have been effectively internalized. This situation suggests a gap between international commitments and lived realities, highlighting limitations in the ability of international institutions and norms to guarantee human security. Moreover, it underscores how local actors continue to contest structural inequalities despite the spread of global governance frameworks. This perspective challenges the argument of Jacqueline Adams that protest art may lose its political and critical power, especially in authoritarian contexts. In contrast, the group's art continues to express strong political criticism and consistently challenges authorities while advocating for the human security of the Indonesian people.

2. METHODS

This study applies a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the cosmopolitan ideas expressed in the artworks of Taring Padi and how the group addresses human security issues in Indonesia. This method helps reveal the group's perspectives on cosmopolitanism and shows how these views influence their understanding of art and their use of art as a tool to respond to social problems. Qualitative research relies on methods such as observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and content analysis to explore people's experiences in depth [9]. Through this approach, researchers can identify key issues, interpret events, and understand participants' attitudes and behaviour. It also requires researchers to remain curious, empathetic, and open-minded in order to better understand how social, cultural, economic, and physical contexts shape individuals' experiences. In this research, observation and interviews were conducted with members of Taring Padi on July 28, 2024, in Yogyakarta. The interviews involved members and co-founders, including Raung Singosari, Ladija Triana Dewi, Dodi Irwandy, and Fitri Dwi Kurniasih. Additional data were collected from journal articles, books, and news reports. The collected data were then analysed using Erwin Panofsky's iconographic method. This method interprets symbols,

images, and visual elements in the artworks of Taring Padi to understand their meanings. The analysis consists of three stages: pre-iconography, iconography, and iconology.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research shows that Taring Padi uses art to highlight human security problems in Indonesia caused by the lack of three basic freedoms: freedom from want, freedom from fear, and freedom from indignity. These concerns appear in many forms of their artwork, including paintings, banners, installations, and performances. Through symbols and visual messages, the group raises awareness of these issues, supports victims, and criticizes those seen as responsible, such as authoritarian leaders and corrupt military figures.

Using cosmopolitanism as a framework, this study argues that Taring Padi tries to build global solidarity through its art. The group's work reflects the idea that all people belong to a shared global community. Because of this perspective, the group uses art to attract international attention to human security problems in Indonesia.

For the group, global attention is important to create solidarity with Indonesians who experience a lack of the three basic freedoms. By encouraging empathy and shared responsibility across borders, Taring Padi promotes what is often called cosmopolitan solidarity.

3.1. *Cosmopolitanism*

The concept of cosmopolitanism, which is rooted in the idea of global citizenship articulated by Diogenes, promotes the view that individuals belong not only to their local political community but also to a broader global community. This perspective prioritizes *kosmos* (world) over *polis* (nation), emphasizing solidarity across national boundaries and encouraging collective responses to global challenges, such as poverty, pandemics, and climate change. Cosmopolitanism advances a moral and political project grounded in solidarity, universal ethics, cultural openness, and shared responsibility. Scholars, such as Brown [10], Levy et al. [11], and Pogge [12] highlight that cosmopolitan solidarity fosters empathy, social justice, and cooperation among diverse groups, allowing individuals to recognize common humanity despite cultural and political differences. The notion of solidarity, therefore, becomes central to cosmopolitanism, encouraging individuals to transcend national identities and work collectively to address global injustice [11].

The idea of cosmopolitan solidarity has sparked debate among scholars about whether solidarity can truly exist beyond national, cultural, or political boundaries. Three main positions appear in this debate. The first group supports cosmopolitan solidarity, arguing that it is morally necessary and politically desirable. This view is associated with Martha Nussbaum [13] and Kwame Anthony Appiah [14]. The second group criticizes cosmopolitan solidarity, arguing that it is difficult to realize because it lacks emotional and institutional foundations. This position is represented by David Miller [15]. The third group takes a moderate stance, suggesting that cosmopolitan solidarity can work when it is based on shared political commitments, as proposed by Hannah Arendt [16].

Supporters of cosmopolitan solidarity, such as Nussbaum and Appiah, emphasize shared humanity. Nussbaum argues that shared humanity makes all people belong to a global moral community and therefore they have ethical responsibilities beyond national borders. She suggests that individuals should see themselves as citizens of the world, not only as members of a nation. Therefore, people should support justice, dignity, and human rights not only in their own country, but also globally. She highlights universal moral principles and argues that all humans deserve equal moral concern [13]. Appiah also stresses shared humanity but adds that cultural diversity must be respected. He agrees that moral concern should extend

globally, but he emphasizes that cultural differences should not be removed. Cosmopolitanism encourages people to recognize global interdependence while maintaining their local traditions. He views cosmopolitanism as dialogue across cultures rather than cultural uniformity. Through interaction and discussion, individuals learn from one another and develop mutual understanding. In this way, cosmopolitan solidarity grows from continuous engagement among diverse groups [14].

Nussbaum and Appiah's thoughts are criticized for being too abstract. Cosmopolitan solidarity is deemed weak because it has no shared identity or political community. David Miller argues that solidarity will be strong if it exists within nation-states because shared identity, institutions, and history create trust. People are more willing to support welfare policies and collective sacrifice when they feel connected through nationality. Without this sense of belonging, global solidarity becomes difficult to maintain and remains symbolic [15].

While Nussbaum and Appiah believe that shared humanity is enough to build solidarity, Miller argues that solidarity requires shared identity. Between these opposing views, Arendt offers a middle position. She argues that solidarity can emerge from shared political goals rather than shared identity. According to her, diverse actors can unite to confront injustice even if they come from different backgrounds. Solidarity develops when people recognize injustice and decide to act together. Therefore, solidarity is based on shared commitment, not sameness. It grows through interaction, dialogue, and cooperation among diverse groups [17].

Arendt's idea becomes clearer when applied to artistic collaboration. Taring Padi's collaboration with Palestinian and German artists illustrates cosmopolitan solidarity in practice. Their joint projects bring together artists from different cultural and political backgrounds who share concern about injustice. Through murals, banners, and woodcut prints, they collectively criticize militarism, colonialism, and human rights violations. Art, in this case, becomes a tool for cross-border collective action.

This collaboration does not remove differences among participants. Each group contributes its own experiences. Taring Padi reflects Indonesia's authoritarian past, Palestinian artists highlight occupation and displacement, and German artists provide critical perspectives on state power and historical responsibility. This diversity supports Arendt's idea that solidarity can exist among different actors who share a commitment to justice. At the same time, the collaboration also shows the challenges of cosmopolitanism, since different political contexts and cultural sensitivities influence how the artworks are interpreted. Therefore, Taring Padi's cross-border collaboration demonstrates both the strengths and limitations of cosmopolitan solidarity in practice.

3.2. Human Security Issues in Taring Padi's Art

Taring Padi is a cultural art collective founded in Yogyakarta on December 21, 1998. The group uses art to highlight human security issues and to promote a just, prosperous, and democratic society. Through its artworks, it challenges causes of human insecurity, such as oppression and discrimination based on class, gender, religion, race, and ethnicity. The group envisions a society that rejects militarism, feudalism, capitalism, and imperialism [18]. In an interview, Raung Singosari of Taring Padi explains that the group chose art as its form of activism because visual images are easy for the public to understand. Many of these images use animated or exaggerated characters. The group adopts this style to simplify complex political and social issues. For example, hybrid human-animal figures can quickly represent corruption, greed, or abuse of power without lengthy explanations. Animated figures are also not tied to a specific person or place, making them easier for audiences from different cultural backgrounds to interpret. A pig-headed officer or a dog-headed

soldier, for instance, can symbolize corruption or militarism in many contexts. Many of the group's works also use the woodcut technique. The collective often chooses this method because it reflects a grassroots art tradition. These woodcut prints feature bold lines that create a strong sense of urgency and protest. The group uses this visual style to clearly communicate activist and political messages

The artworks of Taring Padi reflect a cosmopolitan agenda by emphasizing shared humanity and solidarity beyond national and cultural boundaries. By addressing human security issues such as inequality, discrimination, and oppression through art, the group presents its artistic activism as part of a broader global struggle for justice. The group also invites people of all nationalities to participate voluntarily in creating artworks. This openness supports cosmopolitan values by encouraging collaboration among individuals from diverse backgrounds who share concerns about human dignity. In this way, the group's foundation, goals, and practices form the basis of its efforts to build cosmopolitan solidarity through art. Here are some of its notable works, analyzed using the art interpretation framework developed by Erwin Panofsky. This study uses Panofsky's method to interpret Taring Padi's works at three levels: pre-iconography, iconography, and iconology.

Table 1. The Iconography Analysis of Taring Padi's Artworks

Artworks	Pre-iconography	Iconography	Iconology
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three figures in military uniforms have animal heads (dog, pig, rat). • Farmers wear conical hats, workers hold tools, students and activists raise fists. • A central banner reads anti-capitalism, anti-militarism, and anti-feudalism. • At the top, a panel labeled "People's Assembly" shows people sitting in what resembles a tribunal or assembly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pig head symbolizes greed, a dog head symbolizes blind loyalty, a rat head symbolizes corruption. • Raised fists symbolize resistance and unity. • These phrases link the struggle to end capitalism, militarism, and feudalism. • People's Assembly represents an alternative justice system based on grassroots democracy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The artwork shows people uniting to raise human security issues caused by capitalism, militarism, and feudalism. • They unite to address the issues by holding those responsible accountable and promote human dignity, universal justice, and solidarity across social and political boundaries. • The struggle depicted is not limited to one country. It represents global resistance to oppression.

Figure 1. Sidang Rakyat (People's Assembly) [Source: Witjaksono et al., 2018]



Figure 2. Hentikan Perang (Stop the War)

[Source: Witjaksono et al., 2018]

- An image of police officers in full uniform carrying batons. On their backs is the word “Fascist.”
 - An image of dozens of people protesting.
 - The protesters carry banners reading “Violence is Fascism,” “Stop the War,” and “Boycott.”
 - The police are beating the protesters.
 - Full riot gear symbolizes state authority and control, batons symbolize the use of force, and the label “Fascist” criticizes authoritarian power.
 - A large crowd symbolizes collective action, a demonstration symbolizes public resistance, and many people together symbolize solidarity and shared concerns.
 - Written slogans express clear political messages. “Violence is Fascism” links brutality to authoritarianism. “Stop the War” promotes peace and opposes war.
 - Physical confrontation symbolizes suppression of dissent, violence against civilians represents injustice and human rights violations, unequal power relations show state dominance over citizens.
- The image depicts governments behaving in a fascist-like way, using police forces to suppress demonstrations that defend human security and to assault protesters who oppose war. It shows authorities relying on violence to silence people advocating for the universal rights to protest and live in peace. At the same time, the artwork presents anti-war messages as an issue that concerns the global community.



Figure 3. Bebaskan Pejuang dan Pembela Lingkungan Hidup (Free Environmental Defenders)

[Source: Witjaksono et al., 2018]

- A factory building with smoke rising from chimneys is shown in dark, heavy lines.
- There is a sentence that reads Reject Environment-Destroying Factory.
- Factory means industrial development, Smoke mean pollution and environmental damage, and dark tones mean danger and threat.
- The sentence means collective opposition to harmful industrial projects.
- The factory with smoke symbolizes a development model that sacrifices environmental sustainability for economic growth. The dark tones highlight environmental degradation and social injustice.
- The phrase Reject Environment-Destroying Factory reflects collective resistance by communities. It shows their effort to defend natural resources, protect local livelihoods,



Figure 4. Solidaritas Anti Penindasan (Solidarity against Repression)
[Source: Witjaksono et al., 2018]

- Pig-headed figure with money bags
- Soldiers hold weapons and ride tanks, with skulls scattered around.
- Protesters hold banners that read “Stop War” and “Build Solidarity for the Fight Against Any Form of Oppression on the World”.
- A pig head symbolizes greed and corruption. Money bags labelled ADB, IMF, WTO represent global financial institutions. The large size of the figure shows domination and control
- Armed soldiers symbolize militarism. Tanks and weapons represent violence and coercion. Skulls symbolize many people becoming victim and dying. War imagery suggests conflict and repression
- A crowd of people symbolizes collective resistance. The “Stop War” slogan expresses anti-war message. Raised fists symbolize unity and struggle
- The pig-headed elite symbolizes powerful developed countries greedily controlling developing ones. These developed countries are shown influencing developing nations through institutions such as the IMF, ADB, and WTO. This suggests that international regimes shape domestic politics and economies, creating dependency and reducing national sovereignty.
- The image shows how powerful international regimes in affecting people across countries. It highlights the need for fairness, equality, and shared responsibility in the international system

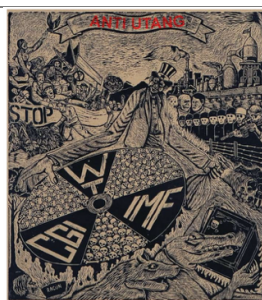


Figure 5. Awas Jerat Renteiner Memiskinkan (Beware of Loan Sharks that Will Impoverish You)
[Source: Witjaksono et al., 2018]

- A banner reads Anti Debt
- An Uncle Sam-like figure
- A wheel labelled IMF, WTO, and CGI, with skulls inside it
- A resisting crowd
- An industrial background
- The phrase “Anti Debt” symbolizes resistance to foreign debt.
- The tall hat and suit of the Uncle Sam figure symbolize the United States and the Western power.
- The wheel symbolizes a system, and the labels refer to international regimes and Global North countries.
- The skulls inside the wheel symbolize suffering and death.
- People holding banners symbolize collective protest.
- The suited Western figure represents powerful Global North countries influencing developing countries in Global South.
- Labels such as WTO, IMF, and CGI show that international regimes affect domestic politics and economies. This suggests that economic policies create dependency and weaken national sovereignty.

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- Factories and smoke symbolize industrial capitalism, while dark shading symbolizes danger.
 - The Anti Debt slogan and the wheel filled with skulls suggest that foreign debt causes social suffering. The imagery implies that loans can increase poverty, widen inequality, benefit elites, and harm ordinary people.
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Taring Padi is widely recognized for using art to criticize human security issues in Indonesia. Human security focuses on protecting people's safety and well-being, not just defending territories or states. It emphasizes that security should be achieved through development rather than military force. The concept includes three main elements: freedom from want, freedom from fear, and freedom from indignity. These relate to meeting basic needs, protection from violence, and living with dignity [19], [20].

The absence of fundamental freedoms has led to human security problems in Indonesia, which Taring Padi powerfully highlights through its artworks. For example, the painting *Sidang Rakyat* (People's Assembly) exposes these issues by portraying violence, inequality, and exploitation. The struggle depicted is not limited to one country. The artwork suggests that threats to human security are part of broader global problems requiring collective attention and cooperation. The people in the painting symbolize humanity united against injustice, reflecting a universal moral responsibility. This sense of unity aligns with human security principles that prioritize the protection of individuals everywhere, emphasizing that safeguarding freedom from want, freedom from fear, and freedom from indignity is a shared responsibility of the global community [21].

In *Hentikan Perang* (Stop the War), Taring Padi foregrounds human dignity over national authority, condemns violence, supports universal rights to protest and peace, and frames anti-war sentiment as a global concern. Each of these elements is closely connected to human security. By emphasizing human dignity, the artwork underscores freedom from indignity. Its rejection of violence reflects freedom from fear, as human security seeks to protect individuals from conflict and coercion. The support for rights to protest and peace highlights the protection of basic freedoms necessary for safe participation in public life. Presenting anti-war sentiment as a global concern further suggests that threats such as violence, displacement, and suffering transcend national borders, requiring collective responsibility to address them.

Taring Padi does not create art merely for aesthetic purposes. Instead, the group uses art to defend public interests. Its name, which refers to the small hairs on rice grains that can cause irritation, symbolizes how its artworks aim to disturb and challenge those in power [18], [22]. Many of their pieces offer sharp critiques of authority. In puppetry works such as *Anjing Penjaga Modal* (Capital Guard Dog) and *Militerisme* (Militarism), the group criticized militaristic practices during Soeharto's rule, portraying leaders as hybrid human-animal figures, such as soldiers with dog heads, to highlight abuses of power.

In *Bebaskan Pejuang dan Pembela Lingkungan Hidup* (Free Environmental Defenders), Taring Padi depicts a factory emitting smoke, symbolizing a development model that sacrifices environmental sustainability for economic growth. This threatens human security by endangering clean air, water, and health. The dark tones emphasize environmental degradation and social injustice, showing how communities bear the risks of pollution and

resource depletion. The artwork underscores that human security extends beyond physical safety to include environmental, economic, and social dimensions. Similarly, in *Awas Jerat Renteiner Memiskinkan* (Beware of Loan Sharks that Will Impoverish You), the group criticizes how external economic policies create dependency and weaken national sovereignty. From a human security perspective, such influences prioritize financial interests over human needs, threatening the economic and social well-being of populations. The artwork warns that loans can exacerbate poverty, widen inequality, benefit elites, and harm ordinary people. It highlights that threats to human security are not only physical but also structural, arising from economic systems that compromise dignity, livelihoods, and access to resources.

Comparable imagery appears in banners such as *Mengadili Soeharto dan Para Jendralnya* (Bringing Soeharto and His Generals to Justice), where a large figure resembling Soeharto is shown being arrested alongside his generals, depicted as dog-headed soldiers in uniform. By demanding justice and accountability, Taring Padi frames violations of human dignity as issues that transcend national boundaries. This cosmopolitan perspective views human rights and moral responsibility as universal, encouraging audiences to recognize injustice in one country as part of a broader global concern that calls for shared awareness and solidarity.

Taring Padi also uses written slogans to criticize human security issues. Some artworks display phrases, such as *Lawan Militerisme* (Fight against Militarism) and *Demokrasi* (Democracy). Other slogans include *Rakyat Bersatu Tolak Militer yang Duduk di Parlemen* (People Unite to Reject Military Personnel in Parliament), *Hentikan Campur Tangan Militer* (Stop Military Intervention), and *Tuntaskan Reformasi Total Tanpa Darah Tanpa Tentara* (Complete Reformation without Blood and Military Involvement). Through these messages, the group portrays militarism not only as a national issue but as a global pattern in which powerful actors use military force to maintain dominance. By framing militarism as a shared global challenge, the artworks promote cosmopolitan values that emphasize cross-border solidarity, collective responsibility, and the protection of human dignity for all people, regardless of nationality.

3.3. Building Cosmopolitan Solidarity through Taring Padi's art



This study finds that Taring Padi believes in cosmopolitan solidarity and communicates this idea through its art. The group suggests that all people belong to a global moral community and share a common humanity. It presents human security issues in Indonesia not only as Indonesia's problem, but as an issue that concerns people everywhere. The cosmopolitan solidarity embraced by Taring Padi motivates the group to exhibit its works both domestically and internationally. Their art reflects cosmopolitanism by recognizing that all individuals belong to a shared global community with common moral responsibilities and human rights.

Taring Padi's works aim to promote justice and human rights beyond national boundaries. Based on humanitarian principles, the group uses art to criticize imperialism, capitalism, and militarism, which they believe create oppression and conflict. Through their artworks, Taring Padi exposes injustice and exhibits its works both in Indonesia and other countries to build solidarity. The group encourages audiences to support victims and oppose systems that cause oppression through symbols in the artworks.

In *People's Justice*, for example, militarism is illustrated by a row of soldiers carrying guns. One soldier wears a scarf with the Star of David and the word "Mossad," referring to Israel's intelligence agency. The soldiers also wear hats with the emblem of the Schutzstaffel, a unit associated with Nazi Germany. Through these images, Taring Padi refers to the persecution of Jewish people under the Nazi regime led by Adolf Hitler. The Nazis spread antisemitic ideas and portrayed Jews as dangerous and inferior. Their policies moved from

discrimination to violence and mass killings. In 1941, they launched a systematic campaign to exterminate Jews, leading to the deaths of more than six million people through concentration camps, mass shootings, and forced labor.

Table 2. Iconography Analysis in Taring Padi’s People Justice

People’s Justice	Pre-iconography	Iconography	Iconology
 <p>Figure 6. People’s Justice [Source: Bosch, 2022]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Armed soldiers with rifles • Uniforms and helmets • Marching formation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Armed soldiers with rifles symbolize state violence, militarism, and coercive power • Uniforms and helmets signify institutional authority • Marching formation suggests systematic and coordinated oppression 	<p>These symbols portray the military agents of violence and repression in Indonesia, such as the mass killing of 1965. The image criticizes authoritarian power structures, particularly military involvement in controlling society.</p>
 <p>Figure 7. People’s Justice [Source: Bosch, 2022]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central grotesque figure in a suit • Hands clasped in greeting gesture • Soldiers behind the figure • Exaggerated facial expressions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central grotesque figure in a suit symbolizes political elites and ruling authorities • Hands clasped in greeting gesture represent hypocrisy • Exaggerated facial expressions portrays the subject as predatory 	<p>The image appears to criticize political elites. The central figure’s gesture contrasts with his monstrous appearance, suggesting hypocrisy. They appear friendly but are supported by coercive power.</p>

Taring Padi also uses *People’s Justice* to portray state violence during the Indonesian mass killings of 1965-1966. This tragedy caused the death and imprisonment of more than half a million people across Indonesia without trial, mainly because of alleged links to the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). The violence followed the killing of six Army generals on September 30, 1965, which Soeharto blamed on the PKI. He then ordered the military to pursue suspected members, leading to widespread killings, torture, and arrests without due process. Survivors and their families continued to face stigma and discrimination for decades [23]. Through *People’s Justice*, Taring Padi criticizes this state violence and highlights its long-term impact.

By creating and exhibiting *People’s Justice* in various international art exhibitions, Taring Padi aims to highlight that state violence and human rights violations in Indonesia and other parts of the world are global issues. The group hopes to inspire solidarity among people worldwide to address these problems and defend the victims of such injustices. Ladija Triana Dewi of Taring Padi explained that this spirit of solidarity led the group to adopt the motto “working together, learning together”. However, this hope failed to become reality. When *People’s Justice* was displayed at Documenta 15 in Kassel, the artwork triggered criticism and backlash. Although the mural aimed to criticize the dictatorship of Soeharto, it caused outrage from the governments of Israel and Germany. They accused the installation of being antisemitic because of two figures shown in the mural. One figure looked like a soldier portrayed as a pig wearing a helmet with the word “Mossad,” referring

to Israel's intelligence agency. Another figure was drawn with sidelocks associated with Orthodox Jews, fangs, bloodshot eyes, and a black hat with the symbol of the Schutzstaffel. For Israel, the "Mossad" figure resembled antisemitic propaganda used by Joseph Goebbels during the Nazi period [24]. Because of this interpretation, the Israeli and German governments considered the images antisemitic and demanded that the artwork be removed from the exhibition. The organizers of Documenta 15 accepted this demand and eventually removed the People's Justice installation [5].

The rejection by some audiences in Germany demonstrates that shared identity plays an important role in developing cosmopolitan solidarity. The absence of shared identity between German audiences and Taring Padi led to miscommunication of the artwork's message. The sense of global interconnectedness emphasized by Taring Padi failed to encourage collective action to address common challenges. As a result, *People's Justice* did not succeed in generating the expected global solidarity. What Taring Padi presents as human rights violations in its artwork was seen as offensive by parts of the German audience. This reaction suggests that cosmopolitanism is more complex than it appears. People in Germany may not share the same identity, historical background, or perspective as Taring Padi, so they do not feel connected to the artwork's message. This response supports David Miller's argument that global solidarity is hard to sustain without a sense of belonging. As a result, the global solidarity expressed by Taring Padi seems weak in practice because there is no shared identity between the artists and some audiences. These findings provide evidence of the limits of cosmopolitan solidarity.

Despite this challenge, the way Taring Padi uses art still represents cosmopolitanism grounded in shared humanity. The group attempts to build cosmopolitan solidarity by inviting other artists and the public to collaborate in creating artworks. During their participation in Documenta 15 in 2022, for example, they engaged local artists and community members from different nations to help produce works for their installation, including *wayang kardus* (recycled cardboard puppets). As an integral part of Taring Padi's artistic practice, *wayang kardus* serves as a tool for advocating social justice. In rallies, these life-sized cardboard figures play multiple roles, such as amplifying voices, increasing visibility, boosting morale, and even offering protection from the sun and police presence [25].

Before showcasing *wayang kardus* at Documenta 15, Taring Padi organized a series of workshops where German artists and local participants collaborated in making these puppets. In Germany, they worked with KolorCubes e.V., while in the Netherlands they held similar workshops in collaboration with Framer Framed and the Lente Kabinet Festival. This shared commitment to advocating justice and defending victims of oppression reflects a belief in shared humanity. Through this collaboration, Taring Padi aimed to help these artists and communities recognize shared experiences of vulnerability and hope, thereby fostering cosmopolitan solidarity across cultural boundaries.

At Documenta 15, Taring Padi embraced cosmopolitanism through its themed artworks, *Bara Solidaritas: Sekarang Mereka, Besok Kita* (The Flame of Solidarity: First They Come for Them, Then They Come for Us). Through this theme, the group aimed to remind audiences that greed and violence associated with global capitalism affect people across the world. Their works illustrated the power of collective resistance by mobilizing, educating, and organizing communities to challenge oppressive systems. Each piece, whether a large banner or a small emblem, served as a call for solidarity based on shared human experiences of injustice. Taring Padi is committed to building local and international networks of resistance by sharing ideas, skills, and strategies grounded in common humanity.

Taring Padi also demonstrates cosmopolitan solidarity by actively supporting victims of oppression, particularly in matters of human security. For example, during the controversy surrounding the construction of a cement factory in Sukolilo, Pati, in 2009, Taring Padi visited the area to participate in public protests against the project because of its environmental impact. The group stood alongside local residents in efforts to halt the construction. Their involvement not only expressed support for the affected community but also influenced their artistic production. By engaging directly, the group gained a deeper understanding of the issue and could advocate more effectively. According to an interview with Dodi Irwandy of Taring Padi, rather than relying solely on media reports, the group prioritizes firsthand experiences by visiting locations where human rights concerns arise.

Taring Padi also expresses cosmopolitan solidarity with the Palestinian people through various artworks, including banners, paintings, and performances. The group uses art to support Palestinian independence and criticize colonialism in Palestine. One banner, titled *عدالة الشعوب* (People's Justice), shows an ancient olive tree standing firmly with an embryo inside its trunk. The olive tree represents resilience, dignity, and hope. This is three important elements of the Palestinian struggle for independence. Placed in a landscape that reflects a deep connection between people and nature, the tree symbolizes the strength of Palestinians in resisting oppression and displacement.

The embryo inside the tree represents hope for future generations to continue the struggle for freedom. Around the tree's crown is a string of prayer beads with a key attached to it. This key symbolizes both the forced displacement of Palestinians and their right to return to their homeland. The roots of the tree extend underground, linking Palestine to wider global struggles for decolonization. This suggests that the Palestinian struggle is connected to other movements for freedom around the world.

To create this banner, Taring Padi collaborated with Palestinian participants and other collectives, such as The Kitchen, Globe Aroma, Learning Palestine, Subversive Film, and The Question of Funding. According to an interview with Fitri Dwi Kurniasih of Taring Padi, working with Palestinian artists and communities helped the group better understand the situation directly. This collaboration allowed Taring Padi members to discuss the issues with Palestinians and complete the artwork together. Taring Padi uses this collaboration to develop cosmopolitan solidarity with Palestinians.

The *عدالة الشعوب* banner was displayed during Taring Padi's performance at Nandur Srawung #11: WASIAT: Legacy at the Yogyakarta Cultural Center in August 2024. During the performance, members of the collective raised the Palestinian flag as a sign of solidarity and support. This action related closely to the olive tree shown on the banner. The tree represents the resilience of Palestinians in resisting oppression and losing their land, while also showing their hope, dignity, and determination. The roots of the tree further emphasize Palestine's connection to global movements for decolonization, reflecting Taring Padi's cosmopolitan approach through art.

Taring Padi's focus on cosmopolitan solidarity and collaboration with international artists has also produced many artworks related to decolonization. One example is a banner titled *Tanah Merdeka* (The Evolution of Colonial Violence), created in partnership with Framer Framed and Casa do Povo. This artwork highlights violence during the Dutch colonial period and shows the long-term effects of colonial oppression. It also addresses the experiences of migrant communities from both former and current colonies.

By working with migrant communities, Taring Padi recognized shared experiences of displacement, loss of identity, and resilience. The banner depicts migrant journeys using ships that symbolize people leaving their homelands. It also criticizes colonial structures, such as the erasure of migrant histories and the glorification of colonial oppressors. Inspired

by the Bandung Conference, the artwork invites viewers to imagine a future free from colonial violence and encourages solidarity among colonized peoples. This message reinforces cosmopolitan solidarity based not on shared identity, but on shared humanity and common struggles against injustice.

4. CONCLUSION

The research found that Taring Padi creates and exhibits artworks both domestically and internationally to highlight human security issues in Indonesia, aiming to foster a sense of cosmopolitan solidarity. By promoting this solidarity, Taring Padi aspires to enhance global awareness and stimulate international action to address these issues and advocate for the victims. The group perceives individuals worldwide as “citizens of the world,” transcending race, nationality, and geographical boundaries. Therefore, Taring Padi believes that people globally need to be aware of human security issues in Indonesia. Through art, the group engages audiences worldwide to cultivate cosmopolitan solidarity, encouraging collective efforts to address these issues and support the victims, as all humans belong to a single global community. Their perspective aligns with cosmopolitanism theory, which posits that all individuals are global citizens.

This study contributes to the development of cosmopolitanism theory by showing how Taring Padi's “itching effect” presents moral cosmopolitanism as agonistic rather than consensus-based. In this sense, their art does not aim to make audiences feel comfortable. Instead, it creates tension, criticism, and debate to encourage people around the world to question injustice and respond morally. This study also contributes to the existing literature on the power of art in international politics and underscores the importance of recognizing non-state actors, such as artists, in the realm of global politics. However, this study has a limitation. It focuses only on Taring Padi's internal perspective as artists and does not examine the actual impact of their works on international audiences. Therefore, future research should explore how effective Taring Padi's art is in building cosmopolitan solidarity and how this solidarity may contribute to global social benefits and help address human security issues.

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