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## EXPLORING CRITICAL AND ETHNOPEDAGOGICAL DIMENSIONS IN LIVING MUSEUMS: ETHNOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVES IN CULTURAL EDUCATION PRACTICES

Rahman Abidin<sup>1)</sup>, Nana Supriatna<sup>2)</sup>, Didin Saripudin<sup>3)</sup>, Leli Yulifar<sup>4)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

E-mail: [rahmanweew@gmail.com](mailto:rahmanweew@gmail.com)

<sup>2)</sup> Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

E-mail: [nanasup@upi.edu](mailto:nanasup@upi.edu)

<sup>3)</sup> Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

E-mail: [didin36@upi.edu](mailto:didin36@upi.edu)

<sup>4)</sup> Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

E-mail: [leli\\_yulifar@upi.edu](mailto:leli_yulifar@upi.edu)

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**Abstract.** Living museum is a concept that integrates direct experience with cultural and historical learning. This article explores the critical and ethnopedagogical dimensions in living museum practices with a focus on ethnographic perspectives in cultural education. Through a qualitative approach that includes participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, this study aims to understand how living museums can function as educational spaces that not only present history, but also encourage critical thinking and cultural reflection among visitors. This study identifies that living museums provide a platform for interactive dialogue between visitors and the cultural practices presented. In this context, living museums are not only places to display artifacts, but also arenas for knowledge exchange that involve community members in the educational process. This study highlights how an ethnopedagogical approach, involving guides as cultural stakeholders, can deepen visitors' understanding of cultural heritage and history. The findings of this study suggest that living museums can function as tools for critical thinking and cultural education, by encouraging visitors to reflect on the social and historical contexts of the artifacts they see. In addition, this study shows that living museums that successfully integrate ethnopedagogical approaches can create immersive and sustainable experiences for visitors, which go beyond mere historical education to embrace broader discussions about cultural identity and social values.

**Keywords:** Critical Dimension; ethnopedagogy; living museum; ethnography; cultural education

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Living museum is a concept that integrates interactive and participatory elements in the preservation and delivery of culture. Unlike conventional museums that are often static, living museums present visitors with direct experiences through historical re-enactments, handicraft demonstrations, and active participation in cultural practices. This article explores the critical and ethnopedagogical dimensions of living museums using an ethnographic approach, to understand how these practices contribute to cultural education and the preservation of cultural heritage.

Living museum is an innovation in the presentation of culture and history that offers visitors a direct experience. Unlike traditional museums that are often static, living

museums create interactive experiences where visitors can engage in cultural practices and daily activities from the past. This concept supports a deeper understanding of history and culture through direct experience, rather than just looking at artifacts on display. By providing a space for visitors to interact with history and culture directly, living museums offer a new approach to cultural education (Kavanagh, 2000).

Within the framework of critical theory, living museums are an interesting object of study because they function as a medium to represent history and culture in a way that is often involved in the dynamics of power and ideology. Critical theory views museums not only as repositories of artifacts, but as arenas where historical and cultural narratives are formed and questioned. Living museums, in this context, can be a platform to analyze how historical and



In-depth interviews with guides, visitors, and community members are also an important component of this study. These interviews are designed to collect individual views and experiences about cultural education practices and the challenges they face. According to Kvale (1996), in-depth interviews allow researchers to explore informants' views, values, and perceptions in a more comprehensive and reflective manner.

Document analysis is also used to assess materials produced by living museums, such as brochures, visitor guides, and website content. This document analysis helps identify how cultural information is presented and communicated to visitors. Bowen (2009) explains that document analysis is a useful method for examining the content and context of information presented in documents to understand how they support the educational goals of the museum.

To analyze the data, this study used thematic analysis, which involves identifying patterns and themes that emerge from observational data, interviews, and documents. Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that thematic analysis is a flexible and systematic method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes in qualitative data, which allows researchers to develop a deep understanding of relevant issues in the context of living museums.

Data validation was carried out through triangulation techniques, which involve comparing findings from multiple data sources to increase the reliability of research results. This triangulation includes a combination of data from observations, interviews, and document analysis to ensure that the research findings are unbiased and representative. Patton (1999) states that triangulation is an important strategy in qualitative research to increase the validity and credibility of the data. Overall, this research method is designed to provide a holistic understanding of the critical and ethnopedagogical dimensions of the living museum, by utilizing an in-depth and diverse qualitative approach.

### III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### **Living Museum Concept**

Living museums refer to cultural institutions that offer immersive experiences of past life. This concept emphasizes hands-on and interactive experiences, distinguishing it from traditional museums that generally only display artifacts in exhibition spaces. In living museums, visitors can participate in cultural activities, interact with performers dressed in period costumes, and learn about traditional practices through direct experience.

Living museums are institutions that present history and culture through direct and participatory experiences. Unlike traditional museums that tend to display artifacts behind glass, living museums bring the past to life in an interactive and immersive way. Visitors can interact with performers dressed in period costumes, try traditional crafts, and engage in daily activities that reflect past life. This approach allows visitors to not only see, but also feel and experience history directly (Ho, 2000).

Living museums emphasize the principle of experiential learning. By providing opportunities for visitors to learn through active participation, living museums make the learning process more interesting and effective. Visitors can practice traditional skills, understand historical contexts through direct narratives, and develop a deeper appreciation for the culture they are studying. This method helps to bridge the gap between theory and practice, and makes historical learning more relevant and contextual for visitors (Falk & Dierking, 2000).

In addition, living museums also play an important role in cultural preservation. By reviving and demonstrating cultural practices that may have been forgotten, living museums help to preserve valuable cultural heritage. This practice also allows local communities to engage and contribute to the preservation of their own culture. Through active participation in living museums, communities can maintain their cultural identity, transmit knowledge between generations, and raise public awareness of the importance of cultural preservation (Skramstad, 1999).

Living museums also have the potential to serve as platforms for social dialogue and reflection. By presenting a variety of historical and cultural perspectives, living museums can facilitate critical discussions about the past and how it affects the present. Visitors can reflect on issues such as social injustice, social change, and cultural identity through direct interaction with complex historical narratives. In this context, living museums are not only places for cultural preservation, but also spaces for social learning and critical thinking (Anderson, 2004).

By combining experiential learning, cultural preservation, and social dialogue, living museums offer an innovative and dynamic model for cultural education and preservation. Through direct interaction and immersive experiences, living museums provide opportunities for visitors to develop a richer and more complex understanding of history and culture.

#### **Critical Perspectives on Living Museums**

Critical approaches to living museum studies question how historical and cultural narratives are presented to the public. Critical theory addresses representation, power, and ideology in museum practice. Living museums often face challenges in avoiding historical simplifications or inaccurate depictions of the past. Critical theory questions how museums provide fair and authentic representations, and how they influence visitors' understanding of culture and history.

While living museums offer many benefits in terms of cultural education and heritage preservation, there are also some criticisms that need to be considered. One major criticism is the potential for reducing cultural complexity to overly simplistic or distorted narratives. According to Handler and Gable (1997), living museums often present romanticized and idealized versions of history, which can obscure the complex realities and conflicts inherent in that history. As such, there is a risk that visitors receive an incomplete or even misleading version of history.

Another criticism of living museums is the issue of authenticity. While living museums attempt to present culture and history authentically, there is a concern that these representations are often tailored to meet the expectations and needs of visitors, at the expense of cultural accuracy. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) argues that in an attempt to create an engaging and accessible experience, living museums may ignore or modify important cultural elements, resulting in representations that are not entirely accurate or authentic.

In addition, there is criticism of the commercialization of culture in living museums. Some scholars argue that living museums can be at risk of becoming overly commercialized tourist attractions, where culture and history are sold as commodities for entertainment. MacCannell (1999) argues that this commercialization can reduce cultural values to mere consumer products, undermining the true meaning and integrity of the culture. This raises ethical questions about the extent to which culture and history can be made objects of tourism without losing their intrinsic value.

Postcolonial perspectives also provide criticism of living museums, particularly in terms of their representation of minority cultures and colonial histories. Living museums run by dominant institutions often reflect biased perspectives and do not fully reflect the experiences and voices of the communities they represent. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2002) argue that without meaningful engagement with the home communities, representations in living museums can reproduce exploitative and unfair colonial narratives.

Finally, criticisms have also been raised regarding accessibility and inclusivity. Living museums often face challenges in ensuring that their programs and exhibitions are accessible to all groups in society, including those with physical or economic disabilities. Anderson (2004) notes that there is a need to develop more inclusive strategies to ensure that all people, regardless of background or ability, can enjoy and learn from the living museum experience.

With these critical perspectives in mind, it is important for living museum managers to continually evaluate and improve their practices, ensuring that they present history and culture in ways that are authentic, inclusive, and ethical. This will help living museums to remain relevant and meaningful in cultural education contexts in the future.

### **Ethnopedagogy in the Living Museum**

Ethnopedagogy is a branch of pedagogy that focuses on education through the understanding and preservation of culture. In the context of a living museum, ethnopedagogy refers to the use of teaching methods rooted in cultural traditions to transfer knowledge to visitors. A living museum can serve as an ethnopedagogical space where cultural knowledge is delivered directly, allowing visitors to experience cultural practices in practice. This approach not only teaches cultural knowledge but also builds respect and understanding of traditions.

Ethnopedagogy is an educational approach that focuses on the understanding and preservation of culture through teaching methods rooted in the traditions and cultural

practices of a community. In the context of a living museum, ethnopedagogy allows visitors to learn about culture through direct experience and interaction with authentic cultural practices. Thus, ethnopedagogy in a living museum not only conveys information but also creates an immersive and meaningful experience for visitors (Gay, 2000).

In practice, ethnopedagogy in a living museum involves the use of narratives and live demonstrations to bring traditions and history to life. Visitors can interact with guides dressed in traditional costumes, try out crafts, or participate in cultural ceremonies and activities. This approach helps to revive cultural practices that may have been forgotten and provides a richer and more complex context for visitors. Ethnopedagogy also emphasizes the importance of community involvement in the educational process, ensuring that cultural representations remain authentic and relevant (Banks, 1999).

Ethnopedagogy also plays a vital role in building respect and appreciation for other cultures. By providing visitors with opportunities to experience and understand cultural practices firsthand, living museums can promote tolerance and intercultural understanding. Through an ethnopedagogical approach, visitors can learn to appreciate cultural diversity and develop more inclusive perspectives. This is especially important in an increasingly global and diverse world, where cross-cultural understanding is key to social cohesion and peace (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

In addition, ethnopedagogy in living museums can strengthen cultural identity and community engagement. By involving community members in teaching and demonstrations, living museums can serve as platforms for transmitting knowledge and traditions across generations. This approach helps local communities maintain and celebrate their cultural heritage, while also educating visitors from diverse backgrounds. Living museums that successfully implement ethnopedagogy can become dynamic and inclusive learning centers that connect the past with the present and the future (McCarty & Lee, 2014). By incorporating ethnopedagogy into living museum practices, these institutions can offer richer and more meaningful educational experiences. Visitors not only learn about culture and history, but also experience and appreciate the values and traditions that shape the communities they visit. Through this approach, living museums can play a vital role in cultural preservation and multicultural education.

### **Ethnographic Perspectives in Living Museum Studies**

Ethnography, as a qualitative research method, focuses on observing and participating in everyday life to understand human experiences from their perspectives. In the study of living museums, ethnography allows researchers to explore how visitors and organizers interact with the cultural experiences presented. This method helps analyze the social and cultural dynamics involved in living museums, as well as how these cultural experiences are received and understood by various audiences.

Ethnography, as a qualitative research method, focuses on observing and participating in everyday life to understand

human experiences from their perspectives. In the context of living museums, ethnography allows researchers to explore the interactions between visitors and the museum environment, and to understand how these experiences shape their understanding of culture and history. By observing and participating in museum activities, researchers can collect rich and in-depth data on how visitors interact with the artifacts, performers, and narratives presented (Geertz, 1973).

The ethnographic approach also helps understand the social dynamics and learning processes that occur in living museums. By observing the interactions between visitors, museum staff, and exhibits, researchers can identify how knowledge is conveyed and received. This includes analyzing visitors' conversations, behaviors, and reactions while participating in museum activities. This approach allows researchers to explore how the museum experience can influence visitors' perceptions and understanding of the culture being presented (Spradley, 1979).

Ethnography also reveals how living museums can function as spaces for intercultural interaction. Visitors from different backgrounds bring their own unique perspectives and experiences to the museum, which can influence how they understand and appreciate the culture being presented. Using ethnographic methods, researchers can identify and analyze how these differences influence the museum experience and how living museums can serve as platforms for intercultural dialogue (Clifford, 1988).

An ethnographic approach to the study of living museums also helps to identify the challenges and opportunities facing these museums. By understanding visitor interactions and perceptions, museums can develop strategies to enhance the visitor experience and ensure that the narratives presented are accurate and inclusive. For example, ethnographers can explore how historical and cultural representations can be improved to avoid bias or oversimplification (Marcus, 1995).

Thus, an ethnographic perspective in the study of living museums provides valuable insights into how these museums function as educational and cultural preservation tools. This method allows researchers to understand in depth how visitor interactions and experiences contribute to broader cultural understanding, as well as how museums can continue to evolve to meet visitor needs and expectations.

### **Cultural Education Practices in Living Museums**

Living museums as a cultural education tool have the potential to create a more in-depth and memorable learning experience than traditional educational methods. The hands-on experience offered by living museums allows visitors to learn through active participation, discussion, and observation. This method encourages visitors to be more involved in the learning process and understand culture in a broader historical context.

Living museums provide a unique approach to cultural education through direct and interactive experiences. By creating an environment that mimics past life, living museums allow visitors to learn about history and culture in a more immersive way. For example, visitors can participate in daily activities carried out by people in the past, such as

making traditional handicrafts, cooking traditional foods, or participating in traditional ceremonies. These practices provide a richer and more real context, helping visitors to understand and appreciate cultural heritage more deeply (Hein, 1998).

Cultural education practices in living museums also involve narration and live demonstrations by guides who often wear traditional clothing. These guides not only convey information but also tell stories that describe the life and values of past cultures. This narrative, which is delivered in a personal and dramatic way, makes visitors feel more connected to the history presented. In addition, live demonstrations of cultural activities, such as dance, music, or fine arts, provide a more lively and dynamic learning experience (Falk & Dierking, 2000).

Interaction between visitors is also an important component of cultural education in living museums. Visitors from different backgrounds can share their experiences and perspectives, which enriches their understanding of the culture being studied. Group discussions, workshops, and other collaborative activities encourage intercultural dialogue and shared learning. Through these interactions, visitors not only gain insight into a particular culture but also learn to appreciate cultural diversity and complexity more broadly (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994).

Digital technologies are also increasingly being used in cultural education practices in living museums. Mobile applications, virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) allow visitors to explore digital reconstructions of historical sites, access additional information through QR codes, or participate in educational games designed to enrich their experiences. These technologies not only make learning more engaging and interactive but also expand the reach of accessibility for visitors of different age groups and backgrounds (Parry, 2010).

With this rich and diverse approach, living museums are able to offer a comprehensive and immersive cultural education experience. Visitors not only gain knowledge about culture and history but also become actively involved in the learning process, which helps them develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage.

### **Case Study: Living Museums Around the World**

To provide further insight, this article will discuss several examples of living museums from around the world: One famous example of a living museum is the Plimoth Patuxet Museums in Massachusetts, United States. This museum reconstructs the life of English settlers and the Wampanoag native people in the early 17th century. Visitors can interact with guides who act as Pilgrim settlers or members of the Wampanoag tribe, who use traditional farming methods, cooking, and other daily activities. Through this immersive approach, the Plimoth Patuxet Museums provide an in-depth experience of American colonial history and the relationship between settlers and native peoples (Deetz, 1998). In Europe, Skansen in Stockholm, Sweden, is an example of a living museum that focuses on Swedish culture and traditions. Founded in 1891, Skansen is the world's oldest open-air

museum featuring historic buildings from various regions of Sweden. Visitors can watch demonstrations of traditional crafts, such as pottery, weaving, and baking, and participate in seasonal festivals and celebrations. Skansen provides insight into Swedish rural life in the past and plays a significant role in cultural preservation and public education (Bennett, 2004).

In Asia, the Korean Folk Village in Yongin, South Korea, offers a unique experience of traditional Korean life. The museum recreates a village from the Joseon period, complete with traditional houses, farms, and craft workshops. Visitors can participate in activities such as tea ceremonies, hanji paper making, and traditional games. The Korean Folk Village also hosts cultural performances such as traditional dance, music, and folk drama. Through this approach, the museum provides a living picture of Korean culture and history (Kendall, 2009).

In Africa, the Lesedi Cultural Village in South Africa offers insight into the lives and cultures of the country's many ethnic groups. Visitors can visit traditional villages representing the Zulu, Xhosa, Pedi, Basotho, and Ndebele cultures. Each village showcases its own unique architecture, art, and cultural practices, and visitors can participate in daily activities such as traditional dancing and cooking. Lesedi Cultural Village serves as an important platform for cultural preservation and cross-cultural education in South Africa (Robins, 2001).

With their diverse approaches and cultural focuses, living museums around the world demonstrate how hands-on, interactive experiences can be used to educate and preserve culture. This case study illustrates the potential of living museums to provide a deeper understanding and appreciation of global cultural diversity.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

Ethnographic analysis of living museums reveals that living museums are not only places of cultural preservation, but also arenas of complex social interaction. Visitors, as active participants in cultural experiences, shape their own understanding of history and traditions. Ethnopedagogy in the context of living museums suggests that an educational approach based on cultural practices can deepen visitors' understanding of cultural and historical values.

Critical theory helps to explore how living museums can avoid biased or idealistic representations of the past, and ensure that the narratives presented are the result of inclusive and equitable dialogue. With this approach, living museums can serve as platforms for critical reflection and deeper learning about culture.

In analyzing the critical and ethnopedagogical dimensions of living museums, it is important to consider how these museums can serve as tools for critical learning. Living museums, through their interactive and narrative approaches, are able to invite visitors to not only view artifacts but also reflect on and question the historical and cultural narratives presented. According to Hooper-Greenhill (2000), museums that adopt a critical educational approach can help visitors develop a deeper and more critical understanding of history,

allowing them to see the connections between the past and contemporary issues.

The ethnopedagogical approach in living museums strengthens cultural education by ensuring that teaching and learning practices are rooted in the traditions and values of the communities represented. Living museums that successfully implement ethnopedagogy not only present artifacts or stories from a particular culture but also involve community members in the educational process. This creates a more inclusive and authentic learning environment. Banks (2009) states that this approach helps preserve and transmit valuable cultural knowledge across generations, while also promoting an appreciation of cultural diversity among visitors.

Ethnography as a research method in living museum studies provides in-depth insights into how visitors interact with exhibits and how they construct meaning from their experiences. Through direct observation and participation, researchers can identify the ways in which visitors learn and interact with history and culture. Clifford (1988) emphasizes that ethnography allows researchers to capture the nuances of visitors' experiences, as well as the social and cultural dynamics that influence their learning. Thus, ethnography can reveal the challenges and opportunities that exist in cultural education in living museums.

Living museums can also be spaces for social dialogue and reflection, where visitors can share their perspectives and experiences. The interactive and participatory approach in living museums allows visitors to engage in critical and reflective discussions about history and culture. Anderson (2004) suggests that museums that facilitate such dialogues can help visitors develop a more comprehensive and critical understanding of social and cultural issues, and encourage reflective and inclusive thinking. This analysis suggests that living museums, through critical and ethnopedagogical approaches, can play an important role in cultural education. By combining interactive and participatory methods, and involving the community in the educational process, living museums can create deeper and more meaningful learning experiences. Ethnographic studies provide valuable insights into the ways in which visitors interact with exhibitions and learn about culture, and identify challenges and opportunities for cultural education practices in these museums.

### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Living museums offer an innovative approach to cultural preservation and education. By integrating critical, ethnopedagogical, and ethnographic dimensions, we can understand how living museums play a role in presenting history and culture in a more lively and interactive way. Through this practice, visitors not only gain knowledge about the past, but also participate in a deeper process of cultural preservation and learning. This approach shows the potential of living museums as an educational model that is oriented towards participation, critical reflection, and a more holistic understanding of culture. Living museums, with their immersive and interactive approach, play an important

role in deep and meaningful cultural education. Through a combination of narrative, live demonstration, and active participation, living museums enable visitors to not only learn about history and culture, but also experience and appreciate the values that underlie them. Hein (1998) suggests that learning that occurs in living museums is more effective because visitors are directly involved in activities that enrich their understanding of the cultural context. The ethnopedagogical approach in living museums ensures that the education delivered is rooted in the traditions and cultural practices of the communities represented. By involving community members as teachers and guides, living museums promote authentic and inclusive cultural preservation. Banks (2009) asserts that ethnopedagogy enables cultural knowledge to be transmitted in a way that is relevant and meaningful to both visitors and the community itself.

Ethnography as a research method provides in-depth insights into how visitors interact with exhibits and how they construct meaning from their experiences. This approach reveals the social dynamics and learning processes that occur in the context of a living museum. Clifford (1988) suggests that ethnography helps capture the nuances of visitors' experiences and provides a richer understanding of the ways in which cultural education can be strengthened. Living museums also serve as spaces for social dialogue and reflection, where visitors can share their perspectives and experiences. Through discussion and collaborative activities, visitors learn to appreciate cultural diversity and develop more inclusive and critical understandings. Anderson (2004) emphasizes that museums that facilitate such dialogues play a vital role in promoting reflective and inclusive thinking.

Overall, living museums that integrate critical and ethnopedagogical approaches can create deeper and more meaningful cultural education experiences. By involving the community in the educational process and using interactive methods, living museums can enhance understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage. Ethnographic studies provide valuable insights into these educational practices and help identify ways to improve the effectiveness and relevance of living museums in the future.

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