Springs and Planting for Life

By Titi Permata





"Bubbling springs.
Pouring out in the reunion with the soil.
Sipped by the greenery of the trees.
Growing,seeping intohuman body.
Together interweaving a harmony, I sat
still ast oundedin the twist of its rhythm"

This piece of poem above pretty much sums up my life attitude on springs.

When I meet up with friends who also have the same concern with springs,we become more determined to do something good for springs and the people around them.

Planting For Life *Community/Tanam untuk Kehidupan*(TUK) is our gathering place in Salatiga which islocated at the foot of Mount Merbabu. Our concern of Salatiga City, which is getting hotter and has problems of water taps in our homes which are providing less and less or even no water at all, to the trees in the city that are often being cut down for different reasons makes us to decide to voice our concern for the springs.



"In Javanese language, 'tuk' can also mean springs. "To maintain the sustainability of springs, all we have to do is to plant trees around the springs,"said Rudy Ardyanto (44), one of the founder sand the first chairman of TUK.

Springs are indeed the focus of our attention. For us, the starting point ofall the environmental struggles is rooted in springs. Even the survival of living things depends on springs. And, in Salatiga City, the respect for water springs is very poor. Many springs are allowed to dry, covered up for buildings or even stacked with garbage.

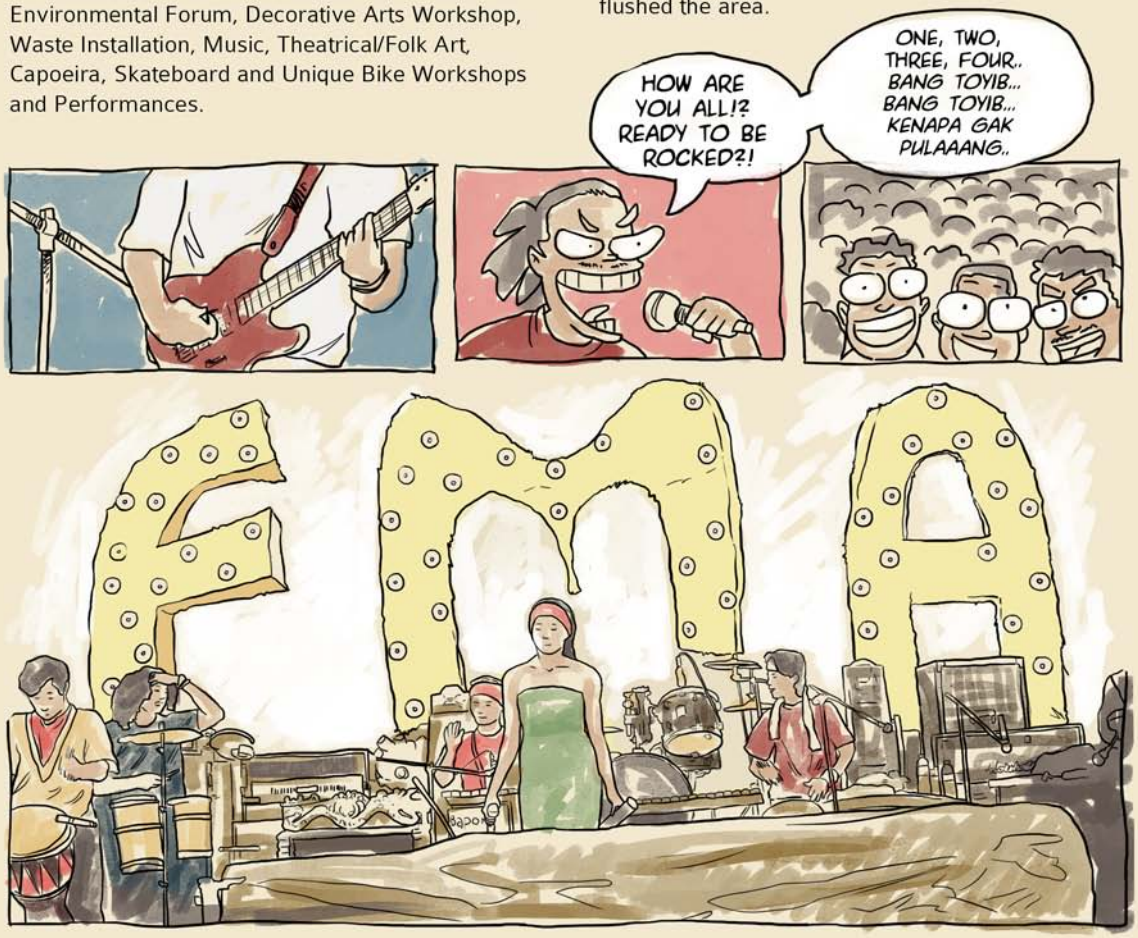
We had to sit together many time sand listen to each other expressing our opinions, and scrawl our ideas to find the right strategy and the best way that we should do to save the springs, as well as build the awareness of many people in Salatiga. Finally, we developed some ideas in the form of a Water Springs Festival/Festival Mata Air (FMA) which was to be held ons prings in Salatiga City and its vicinity.The festival is held on water springs so that anyone attending the festival can also enjoy the clear spring water and its freshness, can play and swim directlyin the spring water, or simply just have a reflection there.

From 2006 to 2010 we have conducted the festival four times in Senjoyo, Kalitaman, Kalimangkak and back in Senjoyo, starting from a trial and error effort into something that has an increasingly bigger impact. All of it is the combined work of art and environmental advocacy groups such as the Environmental Forum, Decorative Arts Workshop, Waste Installation, Music, Theatrical/Folk Art, Capoeira, Skateboard and Unique Bike Workshops and Performances.

If we look back to the experiences our four previous FMAs, there are always memorable moments that appear in the memory. For example, in our first FMA we used the roof top of one of the residents' house, Mrs.Mul, as the main stage. The background of the stage was the houses that were arranged like terraced rice fields.

The live music that night became an unforgettable event. There was nothing like it."Thank you Mrs. Mul," shouted Sawung Jabo, the musician, one of the performers, shortly after heleft the stage. It was asimple expression as a statement of our infinite gratitude.

At another FMA, we set up the stage in the middle of a rice field, not far from the springwhich is located on the path to the festival area.It was unforgettable because we all had a mud bath during the closing night of FMA when heavy rain flushed the area.



At one of the FMAs there was also a joke which is hard to forget. Bob Sick, the painter from Yogyakarta was entering the festival area in his Jeep with a loud roaring sound of siren which made the audience to panic. Some thought Bob Sick was a policeman patroling the area. When he came out of the car, he walked slowly and got on the hood of the car. "You can keep partying, please!!" uttered Bob Sick using a megaphone that he carried. We all suddenly laughed out loud and swore at him in the same time.

Along the way, FMA and TUK did get alot of pros as well as cons. The supporters saw that the methods and activities shown in FMA were very interesting. The festivals became a platform for many networks of environmental, arts and humanities activists to meet and discuss current issues which certainly offered some creative solutions.

Nevertheless, counter views could not be avoided. Some have seen the celebration in the festival as a waste or even a wild party. Some were criticizing the behavior of festival supporters who liked to carry beer bottles, smoked, and had tattoos. There was also an opinion that discussions and festivals were not enough. There needed to be a real action.

The pros and cons were balanced, equally strong. This became a source of reflection for TUK. Therefore in the following year, FMA was deliberately not held. Instead,TUK and the supporters did an evaluation process in FMA 4½ Gathering.

"This is a good time for TUK to rest before making something bigger," said Jane Fuller, one of the volunteers from Australian Volunteers International who helped TUK organized the event.

In 2011, FMA was also not held. The activists at TUK concentrated more on the activities with in the organizations, groups, institutions and at individual level which for several years previously have supported TUK.



This year is there ciprocal period. For example, I or my fellow administrators organized classes, seminar sand workshops in schools, villages where TUK secretariat is located and in other cities where TUK supporters live.

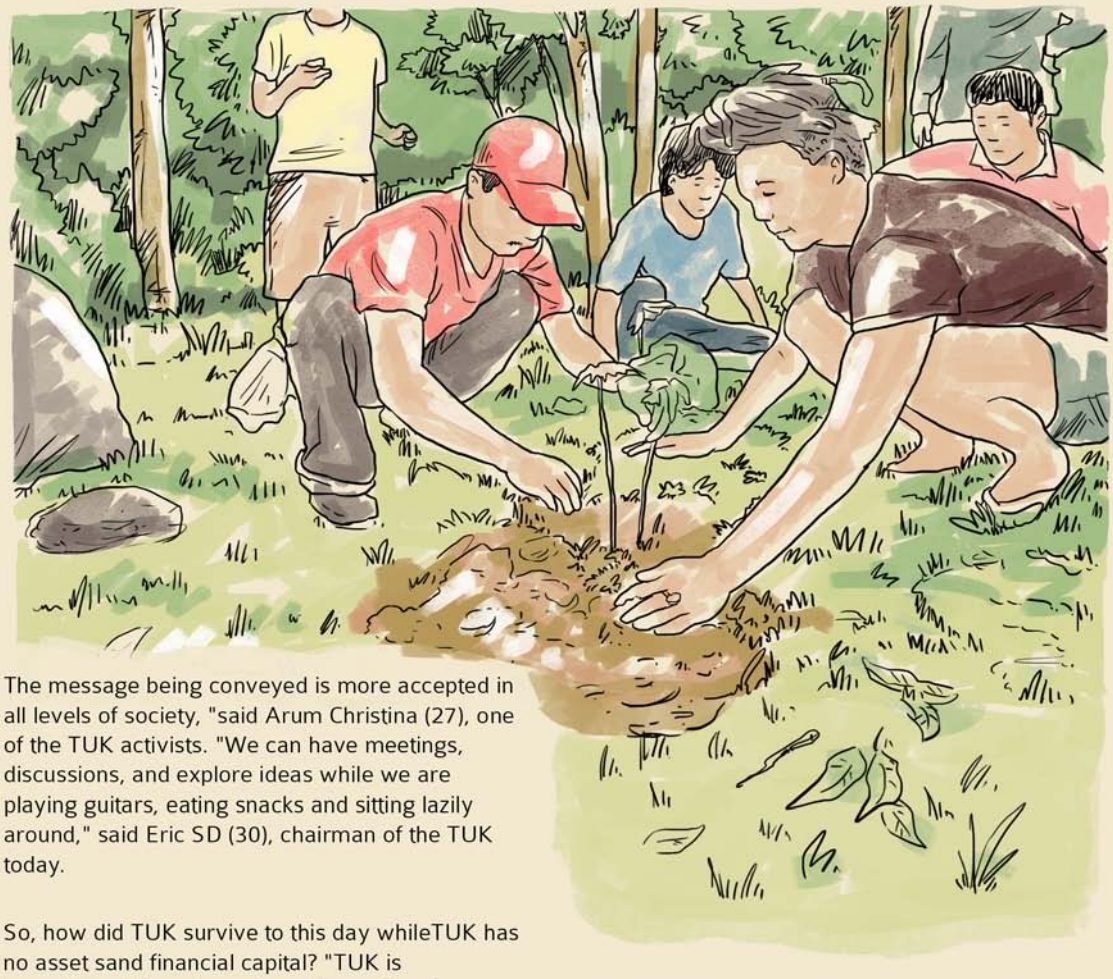
After two years of rest, in 2012 TUK again held an FMA. During the writing of this article (November 2012), the planning and preparation is underway. This time it will beheld at the Soka Old Terminal. Why in the terminal? Because even in what used to be Salatiga Bus Terminal there is aspring. Currentlythe landisfull of household trash and construction debris. The condition of the spring is depressing, muddy and full of moss.

Besides organizing an FMA, planting is one of the activities done by TUK in its effort to conserve springs. For the past six years TUK has planted about 4,000 trees."From that number of trees that have been planted, 3,936 trees are still alive today. They are about 1-1.5m high. The stems and leaves are healthy. The last time I and my friends went there was in the end of last month,"said Pristiawan (31) one of the administrators of TUK. That means the percentage of living trees is 98.4%!

Currently there are seven activities organized by TUK in the community of Tegal waton Village, Tajuk Village and Salatiga City. The activities include the collection of data and aspirations of the people and the government for village regulations draft; the establish ment of a nursery center for spring conservation plants and plants specific to Mount Merbabu; business development of Merchandise 4 LIFE; The Fifth Water Spring Festival 5 (FMA5), and the dissemination of activity arograms and community-based management system. TUK volunteers and activists in those three area are the one simple menting, monitoring, evaluating the activities, and they will certainlybe the ones benefiting from it.

"TUK is a community that has a different approach in raising the awareness of the love for the environment which is through arts and creativity.





The message being conveyed is more accepted in all levels of society, "said Arum Christina (27), one of the TUK activists. "We can have meetings, discussions, and explore ideas while we are playing guitars, eating snacks and sitting lazily around," said Eric SD (30), chairman of the TUK today.

So, how did TUK survive to this day whileTUK has no asset sand financial capital? "TUK is incredible. Although we do not have blood relations, we become brothers just because we have a common mission. In TUK, I geta lot of new friends, new ideas and wider networks, "said Hidayat Said (26), a TUK volunteer who now lives in Denpasar, Bali. Yes, TUK relies on social capital. The assistance is in the form of ideas, concepts, thoughts, energy, facilities and caring volunteers who become the driving force of TUK. That's why, as an organization that is based on the participation of volunteers from diverse backgrounds such as age, gender, region of origin, ethnicity, education and the economy, TUK needs a "universal language" that can be accepted by many people," the pattern of comprehensive multilingual (in) approach, observations, concern and saving of the environment is through the synergy of a cultural approach," said Adi (29), another TUK volunteer.

For TUK, the universal language is manifested in the logo of the organization, which is agreen shoot with soft roots supporting the letters "U" and "K". In the theory of plant morphology,the growth and development of a plant go through aphase of a shoot, a young plant, a mature plant and an old plant.

Why was a shoot chosen? Physicallya shoot represents the letter "T" in the word "Tanam" (Planting). A shoot is an early form from seed plants. Shoots are used in planting. Shoots represent youth.

As time goes on, a change is a process that TUK must inevitably pass such as a change of leaders, members and volunteers or even the secretariat which moved and so on.

However there are some values that should be kept and even developed by TUK. "As far as I am concerned,TUK is very transparent about anything to its members and there are no cliques in it," said Aji Oky (27), aTUK volunteer who is also a djembe player.

"Working together,friendship and empathy are the energy of the past TUK in realizing the goals at present. They will continue to be the energy to build and realize the dreams of equality and harmony between human life, nature and the environment in the future,"said Djuwadi (38), another activist.

TUK intends to take part in saving the sustainability of the environment for the future. TUK will keep on trying to in still the awareness on the preservation of life until the goal of being able to provide a medium for the development of caring attitude is fully manifested.

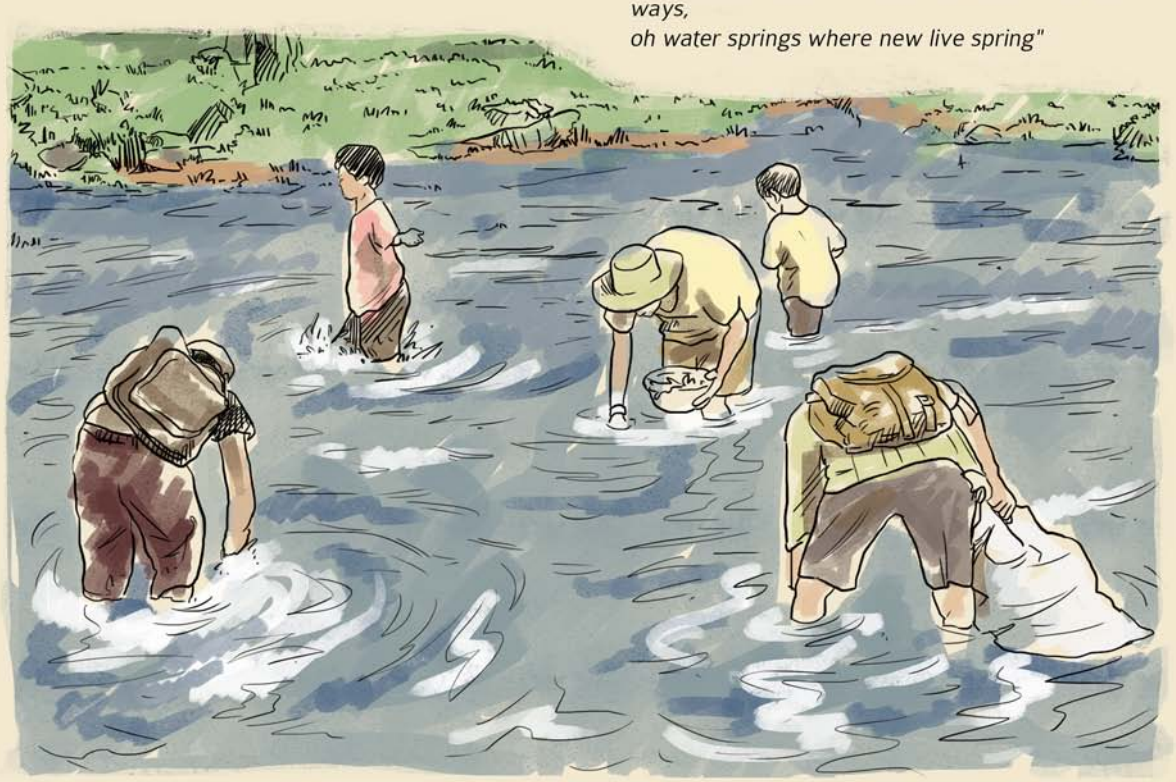
Along the way, TUK has experienced both difficult and happy times.

Names like Eric" the Dread locks", Henry "Berkruk", Jatmiko" the Skateboarder", Wisnu" the Farming Student," Ambon"Punk", Meilana" the Carnival Majorette", Dianne" the Show Creator"and many other shave given color to this organization. And, this is the foundation for the sustainability of TUK.

According to the writer,Jan Cornall, a suppoter of TUK who live in Australia, "TUK is a good example of a grassroots level community organization that works effectively at the community level to educate and inspire an environmental movement. Their creative approach in combining arts, crafts, education and technology, shows that they can bridge the gaps and reach all levels of society. Their hand-in-hand approach provides a model to encourage our spirit and make a difference."

It's fun, but the work is not finished yet.

"The humming songs of springs stretch the humansoul.
Reluctantllyl move from your long and winding ways,
oh water springs where new live spring"



Titi Permata

Titi Permatasari who is called as Titi, is a strong and spirited lady in fighting for her life. For nearly two years, Titi lived with a tumor and now, Titi is healed.

Titi joined the Komunitas Tanam Untuk Kehidupan (Community Plant For Life/TUK), realizing that the environment must be maintained. One way of doing that is by planting trees in order to prevent flooding. According to Titi, regardless the number of the tree being planted, it will benefit the people. Her motto is "Drops and Waves" which has meaning bringing benefit regardless of their number.

