



A Grounded Theory of Safeguarding Culture Through Reminiscing

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Abstract

This study began with an interest in creating a theory about the Torajan coffee culture. *Reminiscing about the culture* emerged as the core category and served as the starting point to resolve the main concern of *safeguarding culture*. By employing classic grounded theory, the study discovered a theory about how culture is safeguarded through reminiscing about culture using material symbols. The material symbols help the community to reminisce about their cultural, historical, and spatial memories. The theory contributed to the literature by adding a theoretical understanding of the role of the culturescape and material symbols in safeguarding cultural values, providing a new understanding of the transmission of cultural values. This transmission is essential for ensuring the preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, and revitalization of intangible cultural heritage, a crucial aspect of sustaining a community and place's identity.

Keywords: classic grounded theory, safeguarding culture, culturescape, material symbol, reminiscing culture, place identity

This study began with an interest in the Torajan coffee culture, which is rooted in its extensive history of coffee cultivation in Indonesia and its significance in cultural heritage. The purpose of this study was to develop a theory about the Torajan coffee culture. To provide some background for the study, it may be helpful to know about the Torajan people and the Torajan coffee culture, including rituals and ceremonies and the Tongkonan house. Then, this article will explain the methodology used and the resulting theory and end with a discussion.

Background: The Toraja and Torajan Coffee Culture

Toraja

Toraja is located on the island of Sulawesi and is part of the Indonesian Republic. Toraja is one of Indonesia's richest and oldest cultural heritage cities and is famous for its coffee in international and national markets. Furthermore, Toraja belongs to the name of an indigenous group of people in South Sulawesi, the eastern part of Indonesia. Toraja people still maintain the legacy of their culture through their *rambu solo*' sorrow ceremonies, Tongkonan architecture, and land-use systems, which together hold the indigenous beliefs *Aluk Todolo*, a kinship system, and the life philosophies of *tau* and *tosangresekan*. This legacy of their culture is firmly passed on through storytelling and collective memory.

Torajan coffee culture

The Torajan incorporate coffee, a commodity with economic significance, into their sense of place and culture. Coffee and its linkage activities, from cultivation to green bean processing to roasting, brewing, and drinking, create a coffee culture that is an integral part of their culture—an embedded culture. The site plan of the Tongkonan house and land-use system (see Figure 1) is significant to Torajan cultural beliefs and socioeconomic activities, as it serves as

gathering places for socializing and promoting crops and playgrounds for cultural and religious ceremonial activities.

Figure 1

Image and Map of the Tongkonan House Site Plan.



Note:

- A. Tongkonan village & kombongna
- B. Coffee farm in paqpalakapangna
- Route from where coffee is cultivated and harvested and processed

The Tongkonan yard is a location for processing coffee harvests in the Toraja culture. The coffee processing activities are family ones that involve the entire family in Tongkonan culture. Toraja carving motif used in Tongkonan refers to the Toraja's house society and reflects the kinship system. Moreover, the *passura*, the carving motif on the building, tells a story about the Toraja's beliefs and daily wisdom.

Classic grounded theory was used to study the Torajan coffee culture, which is rooted in its extensive history of coffee cultivation in Indonesia and its significance in cultural heritage. It

utilized the indigenous Torajan perspectives to gain an in-depth understanding of the larger picture and discover shared patterns from the indigenous culture of the Toraja community.

Methodology

Classic grounded theory (Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used for this study's research design and method. The study's purpose was to discover a theory that explains the main problem faced by the Toraja community of specialty coffee producers and the shared patterns of the Indigenous cultural behaviours used in the continuous resolution of the problem.

Research Flow

Figure 2 illustrates the inductive research process the researcher used to conduct the study, from the topic, purpose, and goal to presenting the final version of the theory. It reads from the bottom to the top, from the particular to the general.

Data Collection

This study first planned to use observations and interviews as primary data collection methods and archival data only as a secondary method. However, the COVID-19 pandemic caused the researcher to adapt the data collection methods to virtual interviews via Zoom and archival data including photographs, videos, and social media. Data was collected from the indigenous Torajan perspectives to understand the coffee culture in a specific society.

The observations from October 2018 to July 2022 were done in Toraja and outside Toraja to understand the entire coffee production process, from cultivation to how the coffee is brewed and enjoyed, which occurs outside Toraja but affects Toraja's culture. In Toraja, the observations were done in Buntu Pune, Ke'te' Kesu,' To'Barana, and Rantepao, while outside Toraja, the observation was done in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and Abu Dhabi. Multiple interviews were conducted with seven people who were experts in or who were part of Toraja's culture.

Data collection was guided by theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling is a process in which the researcher self-questions and analyzes emergent data within the process of collecting and analyzing the data, which is guided by the emerging theory to decide when data saturation is achieved (Glaser, 1998; Glaser & Holton, 2004). Theoretical sampling led to various forms of data being collected in different phases. Phase 1 reflected the need to collect data about coffee culture in Toraja and the Torajan cultural heritage, and it was performed using participant and visual observation, with the outcomes being field notes and a visual data repository. Phase 2 reflected the need to complete the understanding of coffee culture in and outside Toraja as it impacts Toraja coffee culture. Phase 2 was also performed using participant and visual observations, with the outcomes being field notes and a visual data repository. Phase 3 was added as a response to the requirements of the COVID-19 pandemic protocols when the study was conducted. It was performed using interviews via Zoom and archival data, including photographs, videos, and social media.

Data Analysis

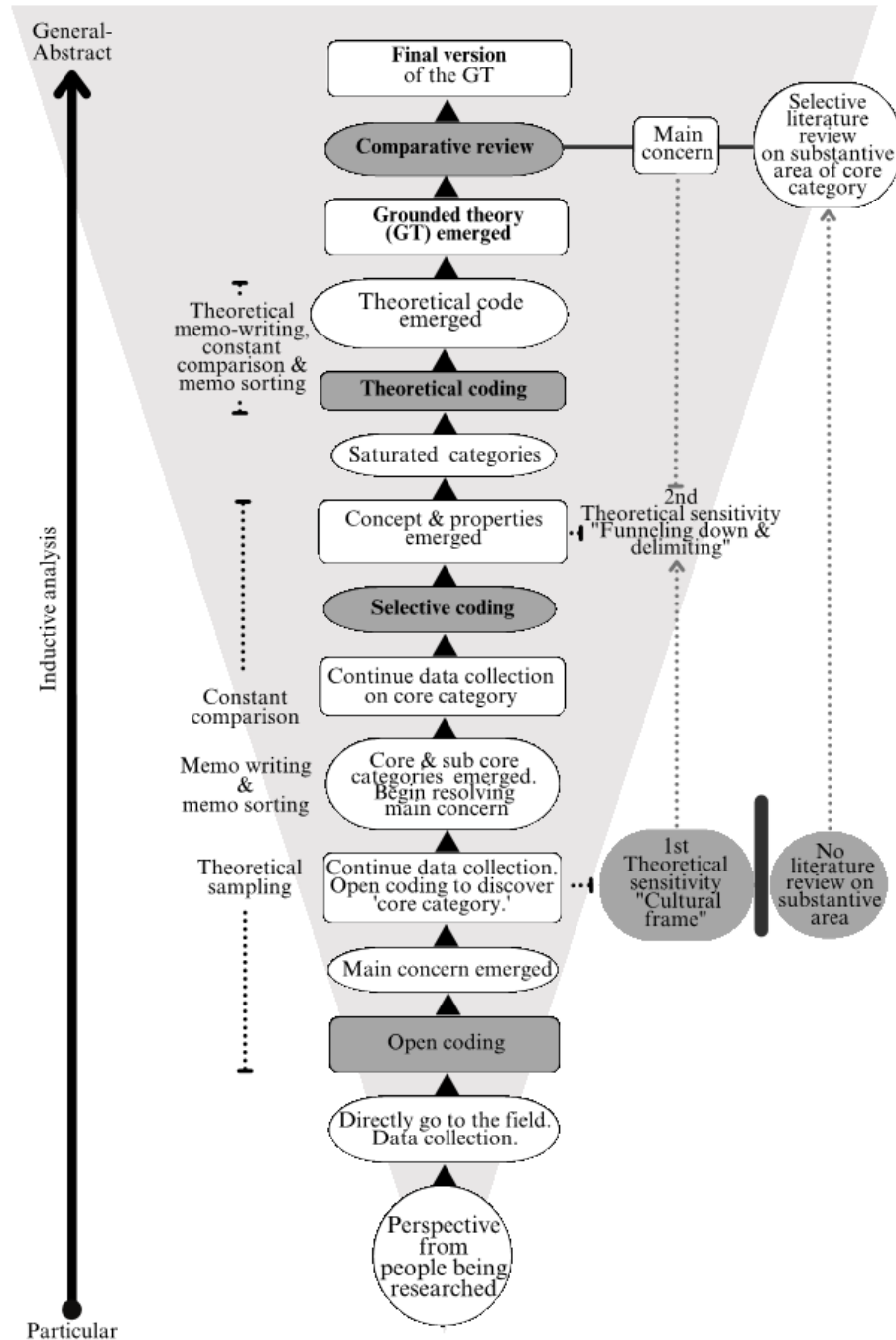
The data was analysed using constant comparative analysis, including coding and memoing. Figure 2 shows the three significant stages relating to the coding procedure in grounded theory (Glaser, 1998). Stage I—the open coding—refers to a process of identifying substantive codes emergent within the data (Glaser, 1998; Glaser & Holton, 2004). Stage II—selective coding—entails restricting coding to only those codes that link to the core category in critical enough ways to generate a *parsimonious theory* (Glaser & Holton, 2004). Stage III—the theoretical coding—is the process of going further into the abstraction level to see the framework pattern that integrates the theory (Glaser, 1998; Barney. G. Glaser, 2005; Glaser & Holton, 2004; Walsh, 2014). Furthermore, Glaser (1978) defined *theoretical code* as “a way of conceptualising

how substantive codes may relate to one another as hypotheses to be integrated into a theory” (p. 72). Theoretical codes define the possible relationships between the categories developed during selective coding.

Memo sorting occurred throughout the constant comparison process. It consisted of reviewing and sorting numerous memos related to categories and their properties to evaluate each memo’s fit and work, their significance, and how they contributed to the theory’s continuous development. Once the theory emerged, a comparative review of selective literature was conducted to pinpoint the key theories related to the core category and its primary concepts. Then, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks from the literature review were compared and synthesized with the grounded theory from this study.

Figure 2

Grounded Theory: Significant Coding Stages.

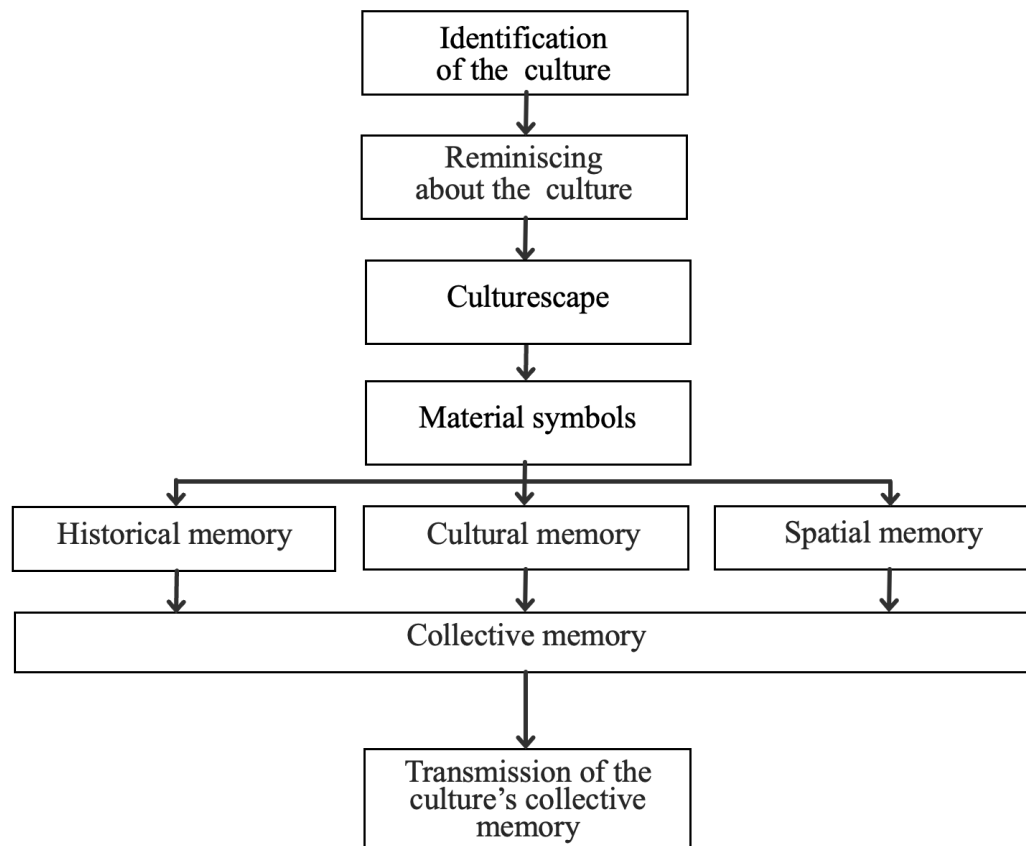


Theory of Safeguarding Culture Through Reminiscing

In this theory, *safeguarding culture through reminiscing* refers to the efforts and strategies implemented to protect the intangible cultural heritage of a community, which involves ensuring the accessibility, continuity, and integrity of cultural practices and traditions that define a community’s identity. The loss of intangible cultural heritage is a prevalent concern within many cultures. This theory explains how the Torajan people address this concern by safeguarding their coffee culture through reminiscing (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Diagram: Safeguarding Culture.



The main concern of this study is *safeguarding culture*. *Reminiscing about the culture* arose as the core category.

Reminiscing About the Culture

Reminiscing about the culture is recalling and transmitting memories about one's past while incorporating various cultural elements from a person's *culturescape*. *Culture* refers to the shared values, belief systems, customs, behavioural patterns, and treasures that characterize a society. It represents the traditions and ideologies of society, which have been developed and transferred from one generation to the next, and shapes how people acknowledge and engage with the environment and surroundings. One aspect of culture is *culturescape*.

The *culturescape* is the complex interplay of natural and cultural landscapes, senses, and livelihoods constituting the human environment. It is the complex cultural environment in which society's livelihoods, identities, beliefs, and sociocultural structures are inextricably linked. When Torajan reminisces about their culture, Torajan incorporates elements of their culture, such as their traditional house and all its decorative elements, to help them reminisce about their culture. Exploring *culturescape* is one way of reminiscing about the culture.

Exploring Culturescape

Exploring *culturescape* refers to recalling and transmitting a series of reminiscences to help others understand the complex interplay of natural and cultural landscapes, senses, and livelihoods constituting the natural and cultural landscapes. It occurs when reminiscing about the culture using the cultural perspective of the people reminiscing.

The *natural landscape* consists of all the elements within the naturally-made environment, such as *kombongna* and *paqpalakapangna* (*forests*) where the coffee is grown, and *sawah* (rice fields), mountains, and rivers. In contrast, *the cultural landscape* consists of man-made elements within the environment, such as architecture, land-use systems, and ceremonies, which record the cultural footprints of people's cultures in the past and present. A cultural

landscape is an imprint of civilization on the natural landscape. The cultural landscape goes beyond the definition's basic scope (which implies a one-dimensional view of human agency over nature) to scrutinize the intertwining of nature and *culture*. For example, several aspects of the Torajan civilization that have imprinted to create the cultural landscape are the Tongkonan house and land-use system such as *kombongna* and *paqpalakapangna (forests) where the coffee was grown and sawah (rice fields)*, and the livelihoods practiced on them, which include the ceremonies and practice of coffee culture on the landscape.

Exploring culturescape is often tied to one's *senses* because it is a complex reaction encompassing individuals' emotions and experiences and how individuals perceive, interpret, and assign meaning to a specific environment. Exploring culturescape using one's senses involves how individuals react to sight and aroma and the memories triggered by specific sights and aromas. For example, a Toraja coffee cupping session is a cultural practice built on using the senses. The cupping activity identifies the quality of the coffee based on its aroma, such as dark cherry and spicy aromas, and flavour, such as nutmeg, and sugary sweetness. One participant, in describing the attributes of the coffee identified during a cupping session, said, "It is not flawless, but something intriguing about it keeps you returning for more." The cupping activity determines the classification and price of the coffee. It also identifies the coffee's origin and the type of process employed.

Exploring the culturescape may also include elements of livelihood. *Livelihood* refers to the activities that people engage in to earn a living. This is especially the case when much of the community's livelihood is tied to the natural environment. It is part of the concept of culturescape, which forms a human ecosystem. Torajan livelihood, mostly, is growing coffee and

rice in kombongna and paqpalakapangna (forests) and sawah (rice fields) and collecting them in the granaries for further processing in the courtyard.

Utilizing Material Symbols

Exploring culturescape often involves the use of material symbols. *A material symbol* is a tangible element of cultural heritage that represents and encapsulates specific cultural values. A material symbol represents rich data on the visual language of the intangible cultural heritage of the people's unwritten knowledge and wisdom. Utilizing material symbols is a form of communication about a culture's beliefs, traditions, and practices. Utilizing material symbols occurs when elements such as architecture, ceremonies, food and drinks, music and art, etc. trigger memories of the past and are used in the reminiscing of the associated cultural elements.

For example, the Torajan process their coffee in Tongkonan village, where the Tongkonan houses and granaries are set as the backdrop and cultural context of the Torajan coffee community. The Torajan coffee community uses the material symbol of the Tongkonan house and its cultural elements, such as Buffalo facade ornaments (*kabongok'*) and Passura' carving motifs, as a symbol of specific cultural values that remind them of Torajan coffee's cultural and historical memories and the spatial memories of the origin of coffee.

Material symbols are used to *remember historical, cultural, and spatial memories*, transmit memories about them, and retain a collective memory. *Historical, cultural, and spatial memories* are part of the collective memory.

Reminiscing Historical Memories

Reminiscing historical memories is recalling and transmitting memories of historically significant community experiences. These historical memories are composed of experiences that happened in the past but shaped the present culture. The historically significant community

experiences are ones that are part of the historical timeline that shapes the present culture. The community incorporates the historical significance of community experiences to create a collective memory.

Torajans use the Tongkonan house to reminisce about their historical memories of coffee. For example, the following quotations, which were translated from Bahasa Indonesia and Torajan languages, demonstrate how the Tongkonan house, as a material symbol, brings back memories of their childhoods and the coffee. “Seeing photos of my Tongkonan home reminds me of the great coffee we had as a child” (Torajan participant, 2022). “These photos— Tongkonan back home reminisced me about processing coffee with my family when we lived in Toraja” (Torajan participant, 2022). Sharing these memories helps them become part of a collective memory.

Reminiscing Cultural Memories

Reminiscing cultural memories is recalling and transmitting memories, which are memories of culturally significant community experiences. Culturally significant community experiences are cultural practices that have been celebrated over time. The community reminisces about the cultural significance of community experiences to incorporate them into the collective memories. In addition, *cultural memory* refers to interpreting past events, individuals, and cultural practices within a community or society. It encompasses how people remember, interpret, and pass on knowledge and information about the past and its impact on their identity, values, and beliefs.

According to Roxana Waterson, Tongkonan is a reminiscent house that has a life within itself. It is more than a metaphor for the Toraja. She wrote:

To say that it is ‘alive’ is to grant the house its own subjectivity and make of it a communicable-with entity. The interaction between humans and houses must then be regulated to ensure a harmonious balance between their respective vitalities. These ideas are reflected in conceptions of the house as body, and the need for the proper performance of rituals associated with it (Waterson, 2009, p. 183).

Furthermore, Waterson (1988) referred to Tongkonan as a house that Torajan uses as a way of documentation and symbolizing, representing, and encapsulating Torajan's shared values, as follows:

A carved house—hence, a noble one—is called *banua sura*. Both words may also be used to mean “painting” or “writing” (the Toraja, unlike the Bugis and Makassarese, did not have any indigenous script at the time of Dutch takeover in 1906, although some Torajan nobles were literate in Buginese) (p. 42).

Transmission of the culture’s collective memory passes down shared knowledge about cultural, historical, and spatial memories from one generation to the next within the community. The transmission involves the transfer of community identity and self-pride through ceremonies, rituals, traditions, storytelling, visual records, and others that express the community's memories about their heritage.

Discussion

Existing Literature

Preserving culture is a topic that is covered in the literature. One example is the framework developed by UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage (2022). The framework entails preserving, protecting, promoting, enhancing, and revitalizing the tangible part of the cultural heritage, followed by transmitting the intangible cultural heritage in both formal and informal

contexts (UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2022). UNESCO's framework has some similar points, and some points are different from the theory of safeguarding culture through reminiscing. Both were started with the significance of the culture and its preservation. One of the areas that differ is understanding how material symbols can be used in reminiscing to understand a place's culturesscape by aiding in identifying its heritage, culture, and cultural heritage, as discussed with the theory of safeguarding culture through reminiscing. The cultural landscape (Dieterich & Straaten, 2004; P. J. Fowler, 2003; Sauer, 1925, 1927; UNESCO World Heritage Committee, 2014; UNESCO World Heritage Convention, 2005), senses, and economic values of the place distinguish the culturesscape (Eagleton, 2000, 2016; Franchi, 2023; Schafer, 1976; Wolde, 2017).

However, based on the literature review and UNESCO theoretical framework, the theory of safeguarding culture through reminiscing contributed to the literature by adding a theoretical understanding of the role of the culturesscape and material symbols in safeguarding cultural values. Furthermore, understanding the role of culturesscape and material symbols has provided a new understanding of the transmission of cultural values, encapsulated in collective memories. This transmission is essential for ensuring the preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, and revitalization of intangible cultural heritage, a crucial aspect of sustaining a community and place's identity.

The grounded theory of safeguarding culture through reminiscing expands the literature by providing a theoretical framework for understanding how the culturesscape and material symbols contribute to safeguarding cultural values. It offers fresh insights into the transmission of these values, which is essential for preserving, protecting, promoting, enhancing, and revitalizing intangible cultural heritage—a fundamental element in sustaining a community's

identity and sense of place.

Limitations

There were two main limitations experienced in this research. First, grounded theory is very language-based; this was a constraint for translating the substantive stories of Toraja indigenous wisdom presented with visual language into conceptual English. Second, the grounded theory relies on the researcher to develop the power to translate the stories into concepts. Various interpretations from other researchers on conceptualizing the stories will broaden the perspective of the emergent theory.

Future Research

There are several recommendations for future research based on the outcomes of this study. First, expanding the scope of the grounded theory of safeguarding culture through reminiscing. The theory of safeguarding culture through reminiscing is conceptually abstract, allowing for modifications in the future depending on new data from within or beyond the Toraja community and coffee culture, broadening the perspective on safeguarding culture for any community. Furthermore, it is sufficiently adaptable to meet the main concern of safeguarding culture through reminiscing further depending on the introduction of new data within the same core category of reminiscing about culture.

The researcher also encourages additional research into the collective memory in other indigenous and nonindigenous cultures using the same concepts of cultural, historical, and spatial memories. A future study on the concept of collective memory to safeguard culture could also be proposed for other research projects if more information about memories other than cultural, historical, and spatial ones becomes available. It would increase our understanding of the relationship between culturescape and culture, as well as the roles of culturescape in

safeguarding culture. More research in these areas could help move the theory of safeguarding culture through reminiscing toward a mid-range or formal grounded theory.

Next, the researcher recommends that in the future, additional research should embrace the use of classic grounded theory in order to get a comprehensive understanding of the values of culture and architecture from diverse perspectives. This inductive study demonstrates how classic grounded theory generates a novel and original theory and is validated in the following ways: fit, workability, relevance, and modifiability—qualities that are essential for research using classic grounded theory.

Future research could explore concepts discovered within this theory. Future research could further explore the role of human senses in exploring culturescape. This theory focused on sight, scents, and taste, but future research could explore the impact of other human senses on collective memory.

Future research could expand the theory with other cultures and by other researchers. Furthermore, it is recommended that more collaborative research be undertaken because grounded theory relies on the researcher's capacity to interpret stories into concepts. Other researchers' interpretations of the data used in this study and additional data from other cultures may broaden the emergent theory's perspective.

There are a lot of existing theories and literature related to the study of safeguarding culture. Another area for future research would be to compare the theory that emerged from this study to the existing body of literature on safeguarding culture done by others, aside from UNESCO, which was reviewed in this article. Further work could also link this theory of safeguarding culture to the UNESCO tangible heritage conservation approach.

Finally, future studies are strongly needed to develop practical guidelines for communities to safeguard culture and sustain a place's identity based on this study's grounded theory of safeguarding culture.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to develop a theory about the Torajan coffee culture which is rooted in its extensive history of coffee cultivation in Indonesia and its significance in cultural heritage. Through this study, it was discovered that the main concern was not limited to coffee, but rather the safeguarding of the Torajan's rich and deep culture and history. The theory developed through this study gives an insight into the role of the culturescape and material symbols in safeguarding culture by reminiscing, which emerged from the data of the Toraja community regarding coffee culture. The grounded theory suggests the use of material symbols, specifically the Tongkonan house and its cultural decorative elements, which are found in the culturescape to help communities recall their collective memories regarding their cultural, historical, and spatial memories. The theory enhances the literature by offering a theoretical perspective on how the culturescape and material symbols help safeguard cultural values. It provides new insights into the transmission of these values, which is vital for preserving, protecting, promoting, enhancing, and revitalizing intangible cultural heritage—a key factor in maintaining the identity of a community and its sense of place.

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