

REARTICULATING THE ONTOLOGICAL ROOT OF CONTEMPORARY INDONESIAN CITIZENSHIP

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Abstract

This paper's aim is to argue that citizenship could be been approached in the dialectical lens produced by creative antagonism between nation in one hand and state in other hand. This tension, if interrogated in postcolonial nuances, become the fertile habitus for Indonesian citizenry as creative and multilayered cross and inter-identity configuration, by which Indonesian exercise its rights and critical distance from both Indonesia as state (in terms of panoptical bureaucratic and enduring regime of political reservation) and Indonesia as nation (in terms of myopic utopia spoken in language of impossibility as the main horizon bounding and creating togetherness of so called Indonesia) day by day. This rich notion of creative antagonism has embodiment in what been called as the surplus of aesthetic imagination explored by but not limited to Nirwan Ahmad Arsuka and DandhyLaksono (read as 2 temporary example of active citizenry of Indonesian) as exercise toward new horizon of what is possible to be Indonesian.

Keywords:

Ontologicalcitizenship, Surplus of Aesthetic Imagination

INTRODUCTION

It is very insightful to read Gerry van Klinken & Ward Berenschot's argument about the weakness of Indonesian Citizenship to control and preserve eco-social justice due to informality and near-mafia bureaucracy hijack state, which in turn become the base for incapacity of effective institutionalization of law/justice in Indonesian day to day socio-political life.¹ Even though, the two authors fail to see that everyday life and its discursive notion called citizenship is often than not a realm of nation or of state. It is very important to acknowledging this state-centric argument if we want to better understand Indonesian

¹Gerry van Klinken & Ward Berenschot, *Everyday Citizenship in Democratizing Indonesia* in Robert W. Hefner (Ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Indonesia*, Taylor & Francis/Routledge, London, 2018, p. 151-9

citizenship which molded by and express informality as nation`s feature, and not state feature.²

Ordinary observant on daily life of common Indonesian would like to suggest that merely there are only suggestions and not the supremacy of law in sphere of public life. But careful inquiry would arrive to different conclusion, in which law and order are wrestling upon by state in one hand and nation in other hand, in multi-layered relation, complex ones and cannot be treated as simply as contradiction. One of crucial disposition elaborated by Klinken and Berenschot is bureaucracy hijacking upon state so that the state fails to deliver socio-economic justice. But this paper would like to arguing that socio-economic justice is broad and very complex realm, and if justice is reciprocal term, shaped by everyday dispositions, not a unitary venture by state, then if the bureaucracy is failing to deliver such ideal it is only mirroring the collapsing of state in terms of incapacity to rule out the nation, both in legitimation and material practices.

In other word, bureaucracy being hijacked is not mirroring the flux and dynamics formation of nation, but a symptom that another agency and discourse exist and maintain the social cohesion by exercise another world of meaning. Here, we are not dealing with Agamben`s camp, in which the state`s solely failed in democratic term and functioning only upon perpetual violence toward its most wicked constituent. Here we are dealing with parallel and simultaneous realm of state and nation in complex dialogue/tension in order to arrive in self-preservation, both in survival and hospitable manner of ordinary Indonesian.

Ontological Root of Indonesian Citizenship

This paper main argument is to overcome Klinken and Berenschot`s argument by insisting the urgency to overcome the entrapment of postcolonial border as the main veil to see the dynamics and vital role of Indonesia as nation, not only as a state. This postcolonial border must be unravelso Indonesian nation could be emerge as itself and not only a projection from state of Indonesia.

²Partha Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragment*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993, p. 3-13

Indonesian postcolonial border means border of Indonesia both in geography and socio-psychology in which the meaning and the end of being Indonesia is a counter-project toward European/Netherlands and Asian/Japan colonialism. In the beginning, it was very healthy, powerful, and inevitable as historic momentum by which Indonesia as an imagined community define itself, in critical and combative engagement with these colonialisms. But as in every dialogue and conversation, the interlocutors being defined by each other.

The problem for now is that Indonesian as state talking to dead interlocutor; there is no more Western/Asian colonialism, what is there is changing landscape of global geopolitics. The West is no longer exist as fix signifier to anything, not only this collapse signed by the collapsing of Berlin Wall, but also in term of global migration, online and automation of finance, internet and online media, even the biggest debt-giver to USA is China today. Here, the border once upon a time fixed between the wrecked colonialized and the mighty colonial is evaporate.

In the era of postcolonial movement turned out to be revolution and independence of Indonesia, the state border is not only sufficient but also a necessity. But once the mighty colonial disappear (or mutate into something uneasy to describe), then the border of state must be relaxed in order to give spaces needed in formation and growing of another logic/imagination of self/meaning production, named Indonesia as nation. The necessity of decoupling nation from state is not in term of erasing the state (which is almost impossible due to Indonesian current status as socio-politico body), but in term of parallel and simultaneous realm coexisting to enrich each other so that every Indonesian has a double reserve of self/meaning.

Indonesia as nation is emerging out of different organizing principles than of Indonesia as state. If the state maintain self/meaning making as fixing exclusive border, thus bordering out in term of administrative *cum* military discourse i.e. self-claiming legitimate violence & *panopticon*³, the nation is applying self/meaning making as reciprocal site, not autonomous entity based on exclusive border (even though the border exist but terminative & transitional). Here, Indonesian as self is site of reciprocity, signed by beaches

³Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge; Selected Interviews*, Pantheons Book, New York, 1977, p. 71

and rivers across the archipelago, causing no single tribe and clan of ancient Nusantara could maintain self-bordering as exclusive venture, but commonly receive stranger or sending out wanderer. This capacity of/for hospitality (making stranger a family or sending a family out to make another family) is essential character of Indonesian and other Southeast Asian nation; being holder of intersecting route makes them capable of perceiving border as relax notion. Yet this has been the blessing and also the curse for Indonesia; ranging from colonialism and neocolonialism to perpetual sources of rich stream of possibilities of hospitality.

Even colonial census policy, which in turn became the vital source of not so healthy identity politics among contemporary Indonesian, cannot permanently replace this trans-identity habitus rooted in regional and global connectedness into pure European rational and self-interest drive. Although success in term of state building as modern and scientific based on European model, this Southeastern Asian practices still remain a living source for moral conduct in everyday life.⁴

The major strategy for Indonesian nation to depart from its state is not by reviving the pre-colonial realm which is forever lost thus impossible to be recognized authentically, but by embrace the new space and possibilities provided by both practices of localities and globally, which is sometimes could not be manage effectively solely by the Indonesian state.

Indonesia as a nation have already move from colonialized trauma to postcolonial movement bordering into “the surplus of aesthetic imagination” of cosmopolitanism citizenship which based on its ancient inter-identity connectedness around southeast Asia area. Coming from H. G. Gadamer and H. Arendt, the concept of surplus of aesthetic imagination has been elaborated by Hamid Dabashi in order to frame and give meaning of the nation as a functioning identity-provider and its primer root. According to Dabashi, the state is the remnant of modernity and its logic of exclusive territory (both geographically

⁴Barbara Watson Andaya, *Gender Legacy and Modern Transitions* in Hefnerr, *Ibid*, p. 31-42 compare with Anthony Reid, *Urban Respectability and the Maleness of (Southeast) Asian Modernity* Asian Review of World History 2:2, July 2014 and his *Islamic Legitimacy in A Plural Asia*, Routledge, London, 2008, p. 9.

and personally) is not capable to provide a working framework for its adherents in front of borderless discourses and activities, such as (but not limited into) saturation of meaning provided by art. Confronting a good piece of artwork, we lost our border, even our selfhood become interrupted and reconstructed again by such art. And of course, there is an inherent tendency of the art to be circulated borderless since only the recipient of its can only not to feel its meaning but also enrich it through creative responses.⁵

Notions like “from Sabang sampai Merauke” is postcolonial bordering, arise from traumatic psyche after being tortured by others, thus border is the answer of containing the harmless-same and rejecting the harmful-other. Although it is self-sufficient from state perspective, this notion of border is too self-limiting, based on false self-perception and positioning, thus wrongly perceive other as not the same or wrongly perceive the same as not strange enough. The result is obvious; new spaces and possibilities are gone under the pressure of logic such as state security or state harmony. But Indonesia as state has been always fail to maintain such state-centered notion; from pre-independence up to present moment, fragments of other has always creatively find a way to enter, melt, form and sustain the already exist and moving fragment of Indonesia.

Indonesia as state is in constant reactionary adjustment toward surplus of aesthetics of cosmopolitan nation, not only toward borderless religiosities but also toward trans-state religious sectarianism. Indonesia`s postcolonial citizenship could not catch up with Indonesia`s cosmopolitan imagination, driven nowadays by younger generations of internet user which are globally connected and locally resilient toward new and smart empowerment practices.

Surplus of aesthetic imagination based on saturation thus borderless of meaning, come forward with other consequences, namely public space-based religiosity as a cordial feature of Southeastern Asian.⁶ Here, the notion of sterile public spaces from religion and religiosities is never get serious attention. Religion is here to stay no matter how specific eco-political regime had denounced it. The capacity of religion to adept and adapt toward

⁵Hamid Dabashi, *Iran; The Rebirth of A Nation*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2016, p. 93 onward (whole chapter four)

⁶Anthony Reid, *Islamic Legitimacy in A Plural Asia*, Routledge, London, 2008, p. 4.

fluctuating situations is exercised maximally by Southeastern Asian. They continue to become religious inter-religiously or even syncretism, based on, again, the notion that revelation or divinity is very saturated in itself, thus can only maintained through a constant dialogue with each other. The result is the birth of another form of public space in contemporary Indonesian; not religious in term of exclusivity but in term of perpetuating the perceived true end of religion by any means embraced humanely by all.

The promising possibilities of nation-based religiosity in the form of caring, loving, hospitable which are all conducting some kind of trespassing borders, is a necessarily feature of Indonesian nation as form of cosmopolitanism. Although religious extremism has taking places in Indonesia and other Southeastern Asia, it is the people which stood and provide any means to counter such horrible things. Of course the states are effectively present in countering such brutal movement, but here the state received abundant support in form of de-radical-ization by socio-psycho ventures. Religiosity as trans-identity and reaching-others activity is still a prominent presence in Indonesia. Southeast Asia was and always is a site of regional cosmopolitan.⁷

Indonesians Exercising Nation-Oriented Citizenship

In this section, I would like to give two examples of how Indonesian come to exercise its citizenship based on nation as holder of saturated meaning/truth. The two examples are Moving and Reaching Literary Movement By Nirwan Ahmad Arsuka and Documentary Films By Dandhy Laksono. In both of examples, the significance of visual regime i.e. image as visual capital is very instrumental. They give us an aperture to possibility that there can be an insightful notion to overcome Agamben`s camp, which is for Agamben always a necessity result of relation between state and its citizen. Articulating such near-healthy citizenship, we need to move forward to Mirzoeff *simago capital*, which maintain that internet provide, circulate and reproduce images not just as carrier of certain

⁷Anthony Reid, *Islamic Legitimacy in A Plural Asia*, Routledge, London, 2008, p. 148

massage but a major site of surplus of aesthetic imagination in screen capitalism era.⁸ In and through an image, I meet you as my co-citizen in digital public space thus some degree of we-ness could emerge. Even though not as permanent as face-to-face encounter, image-mediated encounter could also endorse the quality of public life in which cordial concern is spoken out, before and upon an image that transcendence us by its capacity to deliver surplus of aesthetic imagination, imagination about we-ness as living organism in worldliness.

The *first* example is Nirwan Ahmad Arsuka's excellent network of literary movement. The former senior redactor of *Kompas* Newspaper during and following the collapsing of Soeharto's New Order regime, Arsuka initiate with his inner cycle friends some kind of literary movement which called *Pustaka Bergerak* (Moving Literacy), based on his concern about national illiteracy among the rural in provincial and inland part of Archipelago. Arsuka's movement is voluntary, financed by friends networking in the beginning but rolling out to be financed by any dissent Indonesian across the nation, even this literacy-based solidarity appreciate by the President by managing that National Postal company must makes room for free shipping for Arsuka's venture. We see *Pustaka Kuda* (moving literacy based by horse), *Pustaka Perahu* (moving literacy based by sea boat), *Pustaka Sepeda* (moving literacy based by bicycle equipped with books holder), *Pustaka Angkot* (moving literacy based by intra/inter-city public taxi), and countless form of delivering books/literature to its reader in remote areas or in area where library in not a hotspot, and thus replacing the old schema of library which always passively wait for the reader to come.

There are several reasons why I make Arsuka's literacy movement as an embodiment of cosmopolitan citizenship in contemporary Indonesia. *First* of all, it is not a single man adventure but a collegial and collective venture of all concern people about the strategic value of literacy in fighting not only corruption and religious extremism, but also to build awareness about the meaning and the ends of being Indonesian. The source of

⁸It is important to read Ben Anderson's print capitalism in order to come to understand screen capitalism and its major different with the former form of circulate capital. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Community*, Verso, London, 2006, p. 34

books in this movement is not only from Indonesian inside Indonesia but from Indonesians around the world and also other people in countries overwhelmingly passionate to this movement. New books or second-hand ones, by which children and other potential reader in the remote mountain or in area of encroach in the middle of the city, could open the window to see the world, thus making possible what Ben Anderson call solidarity based on printed text.

But also there is something more than printed text which instrumental here, and that is the my *second* reason; Arsuka and the movement actively use online social media to promote their venture so that new books donator could give away their books, but also Arsuka and his initial movement become example for another communities to come to similar yet different kind of literacy movement. Here, the image of one manager of Pustaka Kuda being surrounded by children in the mountain, emerge as a functioning site of we-ness as Indonesian and also as human. The image stomping the viewers with its powerful seduction of and as remnant utopia of ideal solidarity among Indonesian.⁹ Being actively since 2009, I dare to say that Arsuka and the moving literacy movement is the first anchor for online-based solidarity of Indonesia, portrait not only the abundance material sacrifice by ordinary citizen from across Nusantara and the world in one side as books donators & I the other side the managers of *Pustaka Bergerak*, but also the insisting a degree of caring and loving others in which I-ness not only interrupted but also reconstructed.

The *last* argument is the vital promise of this literacy ventures. Since literature is the core locus of the movement, it is promising not only delivering wisdom in transcendental notion, but also wisdom in practical exercise. Reading and understanding books require not only time but pain taking for self-education. *Pustaka Bergerak* gives another chance for Indonesian to be born in solidarity by itself with itself as its midwife in this long and simultaneous process. The state is present but in term of being paralleled by nation with its creativity and solidarity, to *care* out not to *rule* out.

⁹Nicholas Mirzoeff, *How to See the World; An Introduction to Images, from Self-Portraits to Selfies, Maps to Movies, and More*, Basic Books, New York, 2016, p. 77

The second example of cosmopolitan citizenship on Indonesian is Dandhy Laksono's very good documentary films embarking critically to power abusing across the state both by its apparatus or by corporate bodies. *Rayuan Pulau Palsu* (Seduction of Fake Island, about reclamation of Jakarta bay), *Nuklir Jawa* (Java's Nuclear, about energy crisis resolution based on nuclear and its consequences in Java), *Asimetris* (Asymmetric, about palm oil plantation industry and its asymmetric consequences to inhabitants and their eco-land quality) and others films, all attractive for several segments of Indonesian, ranging from activist, artist, academic, student, worker and others in-between position to arrive in critical assertion about what is going to happen or happening in Indonesian public life.

Working under *Watch doc Documentary* production house, Laksono's film always an entry in waiting list to view by critical and engage Indonesian. Delivering not only the sense of aesthetic but also a bold concern about power relation that shape Indonesian visual and psychological landscape, Laksono speaks loudly and artistically about new possibilities of Indonesian worldliness, if only such atrocity based on corruptive power holder, could be challenged.¹⁰

Seeing his tweet @Dandhy_Laksono in Twitter at 29 April 2018 when his most recent film entitle *Asimetri* being staged in the deck Green Peace's *Rainbow Warrior* when docking in Jakarta bay, I attend to not only to a crowd of Indonesian and foreigners swarmingat/in saturation and surplus meaning provided by the aesthetic of certain moving images, but also borderless solidarity to the Indonesian being oppressed. Here, Laksono's films already become effective witness to a near-failing state incapable to negotiate further positive possibilities for its citizens in front of greedy, aggressive and manipulative market injustice.¹¹ In one sense we can understand his movies as a barking critics against TV conglomeration hijacking Indonesian visual frequencies. Laksono is offering multilayer of possibilities for Indonesian nation to emerge from state-market image regime to people-

¹⁰Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look; The Counter History of Visuality*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2011, p. 277-284

¹¹See Richard Bellamy, *Justice in the Community; Walzer on Pluralism, Equality and Democracy* in David Boucher and Paul Kelly (Ed.), *Social Justice; from Hume to Walzer* (London, Routledge, 1998), p.161-163

nation image networking, in which solidarity and justice is the main cause for all societal ventures.

It is obvious that films as the form and the medium of Laksono`s aesthetic activism is very cordial to communicate critical message to young and moving audiences. He and his coworkers and audiences manage to move from what is called visual-online citizenship to cosmopolitan citizenship without leaving the former as the base for the latter, by engage in meaningful and critical conversation based on practicality of injustice faced by ordinary Indonesian. Here internet and other social interaction based on digitalization provide and channeling solidarity (with its complex mixture of border crossing, caring, loving, engagement) between and among Indonesian citizen in a way that cannot be exercised by previous mode of communication, both printing and audio-visual. In and by internet, time-space are flattered so that the effect of repetition reach the peak of psychological barrier, lead to either tribalism or cosmopolitanism. But tribalism is automatically being rejected by constructive self-awareness of and self-dependence to, the others. The others and its suffering is in constant calling for solidarity against power abusive. Laksono and his films invoke such criticism by which I-ness and we-ness meet together to celebrate another possibility of resistance, and resistance, in turn, promises victory.

Both Arsuka`s *Pustaka Bergerak* and Laksono`s documentary films are the signature of Indonesian as nation-based citizenry still in remaking stage of its *myth* to avoid entrapment of state`s realism. If state employs formal and straight structure of legitimate violence masquerading as nameless/faceless administrative mechanism, nation has its fragments and itself is fragmented into multilayer sites and locus of self-arrangement.¹²

Arsuka and laksono embrace online realm as effective provider of image, moving images, and sound, thus has become *visual scope* of citizenship as embodiment of nation-based public space. Internet is inherently anti-structure and globally connected in which time-space and borders are blurred into a principle of self-arrangement to meet the others, not to meet the same. Indonesian as a state is inherently always develop anticipated attitude

¹²Partha Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragment*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993, p. 220-223

toward otherness of others, this why the new-ness of empowering practices perceived as near dangerous and must be keep under state control. The result is obvious; status quo of the state and the only new-ness could emerge is the ones who blessed by the predatory capitalist market. But one thing is crucial here; Agamben`s notion of *camp* for nation/people is not a necessity result of incompetent state, because the nation have several way to conduct self-arrangement without have to be a state`s pray.

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