PERFORMATIVE ACTS IN INDONESIA’S ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY

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This paper addresses an empirical puzzle in Indonesia’s democracy. On the one hand, the public have repeatedly shown that they have a low level of trust in key democratic institutions. On the other hand, Indonesian electorates have a high level of optimism in electoral democracy, and the turnout level in elections remains robust. How should we explain this paradox? This paper argues that the regular displays of democratic rituals help to shape the identity of Indonesian electorates as members of a democratic society. The repeated displays of democratic rituals maintain the electorates’ excitement and belonging in Indonesia’s electoral democracy. The paper uses ethnographic observation on the 2019 Indonesia presidential debate public screenings (nonton bareng/nobar) to understand the paradox in Indonesia’s electoral democracy. The author finds that the ethnographic method can help political scientists to answer questions that are difficult to answer when one relies only on traditional political science’s quantitative and qualitative methods. Based on the findings from ethnographic observations, one can formulate more sensitive questions that can be further interrogated through both qualitative and quantitative methods that are familiar to political scientist. In doing so, this paper contributes to the development of the interdisciplinary approach in understanding political phenomena that are difficult to answer by using traditional approaches in political science.

Keywords: elections, democracy, performativity, ethnography

Governmental Practices in Indonesia: Non-Calculative Modality, State Power, and the (Im)Possibility of Politics

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Political anthropologists’ attention to the state has been informed by the ideas that impersonal, calculative, and rational techniques are the primary way for the state in ruling its subjects (Foucault 2004, Scott 1998). Recent literatures on the state’s technologies of rule, however, have disrupted this understanding by decentering calculative practices (i.e., surveillance and statistics) in their ethnographic investigations to the state’s ruling practices. This disruption takes form in
various analytical vocabularies—among others are morality (Fassin 2015), aesthetics (Ghertner 2015), affect (Jakimow 2018, Shoshan 2016, Masco 2014), and materiality (Fehérváry 2013, Hull 2012). Nevertheless, little of these contributions have been borne out of Indonesian-based ethnographic works. This panel is an attempt to use contemporary theoretical development on variations of ruling techniques to comprehend governmental practices in Indonesia. Thus, our first question is, how does the Indonesian government(s) rule? What are the spectrums of governmental practices that we can unearth from ethnographic cases in Indonesia? The answers to this question shall not be unitary as we define the state as a multi-spatial, multi-scalar, and disaggregated entity (Gupta 2012, Ferguson & Gupta 2002).

Furthermore, over the last decade, the question of (im)possibility of politics (e.g. practices that challenge or furthering state power) has always been a specter for scholars dealing with the modalities of rule. This specter has been addressed in two ways. First, deriving from Foucauldian conception of power, the state appears as a ubiquitous entity leaving no room for individuals to exercise their politics (i.e., governmentality; see Rose 2006; Foucault 2004). Second, deriving from a less invasive conceptualization of power, the possibility of subversive politics can be found in diminutive practices that challenge the state power (Scott 2009, Li 2007, Scott 1987). While both frameworks are fruitful in thinking about the implication of state power to the practice of politics, we wish to transcend this binary of domination and resistance. Given the dearth of sustained conversation of the implication of introducing new analytical vocabularies to the question of the modality of rules to the practice of politics, we arrive at our second question: how can investigating non-calculative modality of rule contributes to our anthropological understanding of the (im)possibility of politics? Can we possibly transcend the binary?

Our panel invites papers that concern non-calculative modality of rule (i.e., forms of governing technique not anchored in scientific, mechanical, and rational practices), politics beyond domination/resistance, or both. We welcome papers from various topics of ethnographic research including health, politics, economy, education, infrastructure, development, non-governmental organizations, and gender and sexuality across times.

CORPORATE GOVERNMENTALITY AND THE WILL TO ACCUMULATE: ANTHROPOLOGY OF CORPORATION IN THE LAPINDO MUDFLOW DISASTER
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This paper proposes the concept of corporate governmentality as a possibility to rethink forms of governance other than the state. Reformulating La Perriere (Foucault 2007, 96), corporate governmentality refers to a set of groups, collectives or institutions that we called the corporations and how these corporations conduct power and using methods with its specific relations to men, material things and events. In recent years, anthropologists shifted their interest on power from focusing on state actors to corporate actors and forms of power practices shaping societies and engages in people’s daily life (Benson & Kirsch 2010a; Partridge et al.2011; Rajak et al.2011; Welker et al.2011). Anthropologists observe the disastrous impact of corporate operations toward the environment (Kirsch 2014; Welker et al. 2011, Benson & Kirsch 2010b), while in the field of disaster studies, scientists from various disciplines also examine the role of corporations in industrial and technological disasters (Gephart 1993, Rajan, 1999 & 2002, Dyer 2002, Button