

# Contextualizing Kymlicka's Multicultural Citizenship in Surabaya

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## **Abstrak**

Sebagai kota terbesar kedua di Indonesia, Surabaya memiliki daya tarik yang luar biasa dalam proses urbanisasi, yang secara tidak langsung telah menanamkan benih-benih keragaman di kota ini. Warga kota Surabaya adalah penduduk yang egaliter dan terbuka. Selain penduduk asli yang biasa disebut *arek soerabaya*, ada juga penduduk pendatang yang berasal dari Madura, Arab, Cina, Ambon, Bugis, dan Melayu. Kelompok-kelompok ini hidup berdampingan secara damai di Surabaya. Artikel ini berangkat dari riset yang penulis lakukan melalui wawancara dengan penduduk lokal, kaum migran, politisi dan intelektual. Riset tersebut bermuara pada pertanyaan bagaimana para pendatang bisa bertahan hidup di Surabaya dalam nuansa keragaman dan keberagaman; serta bagaimana mereka melihat program-program pemerintah seputar multikulturalisme. Dengan merujuk pada konsep *multicultural citizenship* dari Kymlicka, artikel ini menunjukkan bahwa meski terkesan “damai,” terdapat resistensi antara penduduk lokal dan migran khususnya yang berkaitan dengan politik dan ekonomi. Sebagian kelompok mayoritas, penduduk lokal termarginalkan dalam urusan politik dan ekonomi akibat kalah bersaing dengan penduduk migran yang ada di Surabaya. Hal ini semakin diperparah dengan program festival multikulturalisme pemerintah Surabaya yang terkesan seremonial tahunan tanpa melibatkan penduduk lokal.

**Kata kunci:** Multikulturalisme, Kewargaan, Surabaya, Migran.

## Introduction

Although there are works on multicultural societies in Indonesia, there is almost no work focusing on multiculturalism and or multicultural citizenship. Scholars working on this issue prefer to use the term cultural diversity, pluralism or diversity than multiculturalism. Hefner (2001), for instance, exercises the term of plural societies or cultural pluralism to depict the phenomenon of religious and cultural diversities in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia;<sup>1</sup> Wang (2001) who uses the term of legal pluralism to describe pluralism in Indonesia,<sup>2</sup> or, Bowen (2005) who utilizes normative pluralism to portray the government-imposed pluralism during the New Order.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, I argue that although Indonesian people are not familiar with the term multiculturalism, they are aware of the idea of pluralism and (cultural and religious) diversity. This implies difference approaches one government has taken towards diversities within its territory.

Here I attempt to scrutinize the idea of multicultural citizenship in the local context of Surabaya, Indonesia. The rationales of this article are that as the second biggest cities in Indonesia, and as one of the busiest and most important port in Asia since the Dutch colony, Surabaya has magnetic power to attract people to come to this city and that Surabaya is one model city that deals with diversities as its profile. The government of Surabaya city announces that Surabaya people are egalitarian and open. The local and indie citizens are *Arek Soerabaya* (Surabaya resident), coming from *kampong* (village), who is originally

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<sup>1</sup> Robert W. Hefner, "Multiculturalism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia," an introduction in Robert W. Hefner (ed.), *the Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 1-59.

<sup>2</sup> Charleston CK Wang, *Legal Pluralism in Indonesia: Anachronism or an Idea whose Time Has Come?*, 2001, article can be downloaded at <http://www.wanglaw.net/files/indonesia1.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> John Bowen, "Normative Pluralism in Indonesia: Regions, Religions, and Ethnicities" in Will Kymlicka & Baogang He (eds.), *Multiculturalism in Asia* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press Inc., 2005), 152-169.

called as *Arek Kampong* (villagers).<sup>4</sup> In addition to them, there are some ethnic groups living in Surabaya such as Madurese, Arabian, Chinese, Ambonese, Bugis, and Malay. Evidently, these groups are living in harmony although there are some tensions among them but do not escalate into mass violence.

I did mini research to capture the picture. I came to and interviewed some prominent persons representing local and indie-citizens, migrant-citizens, politicians and scholars. The interview was around their view of migrant people in Surabaya and how they have survived in Surabaya, and their view about Surabaya government's program concerning on cultural diversities. The only interviewee I could not meet was from the government officer. Having a mini research on this issue, I raise a question of how much the idea of multicultural citizenship is beneficial to mapping citizenship in Surabaya and its problems as well.

This article is structured as follows. First section describes the terms and theories around multicultural citizenship. Here I focus only on Kymlicka's *multicultural citizenship* and Fong's *immigration*. The second is about my findings during the research. Here I compare the data I got with the response from the interviewees. And the third is about my analysis on the research findings through the theories I described in the first section.

## Classifying Theories

Theoretically speaking, multiculturalism and multicultural citizenship are not originated from Asian countries, including Indonesia. The discourse has flourished in the European and US countries that face problems of migrants. Therefore, most works on multiculturalism are about Europe whilst few works is about United States; and the forefathers of this field are Western people or those who live in Western countries. To cite some, there are Bhikhu Parekh, Will Kymlicka, Bagong

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<sup>4</sup> Profile of Surabaya, can be retrieved from <http://www.surabaya.go.id/profilkota/index.php?id=81>.

He, Denis Wrong, Nasar Meer, and many more. However, it does not imply that multiculturalism exclusively belongs to Western scholarship. Kymlicka (2005) argues that multiculturalism and minority rights have been ‘internationalized’ through networks of scholars and activists, and recognition of international organization such as the United Nations (UN), the World Bank, and the International Labor Organization (ILO).<sup>5</sup> Hence, the work on multiculturalism and multicultural citizenship in the context of Asian countries, especially Indonesia, takes a place.

Amongst the scholars focusing on multicultural citizenship, Kymlicka is recognized as the forefather of this field. His “Multicultural citizenship: a liberal theory of minority rights” highlights his comprehensive argument supporting the idea of minority group’s survival in line with liberal theories of justice. Multicultural citizenship is liberal theory because it is justified on the grounds of freedom of conscience that treats autonomy as the ‘most basic liberal right.’<sup>6</sup> Autonomy Kymlicka notices is meant the ability to recognize and revise one’s beliefs and convictions. Culture is then the structure whose translational abilities provide meaning to the world. Therefore, the existence of many cultures as vehicles of interpretation, does not threaten the solidarity of the modern state, since nationality is detached from patriotism and patriotism is defined as a shared commitment to diversity, rather than as a product of ‘a common national identity.’<sup>7</sup>

In order to comprehend the complexity of cultural diversity, Kymlicka differentiates between immigrants and national minorities. The first is those who voluntarily entered one country are expected to ‘participate within the public institutions of the dominant culture,’<sup>8</sup> and they are not ‘asking for a parallel society.’<sup>9</sup> What they demand to the host state is its recognition and respect toward their cultural particularity in

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<sup>5</sup> Will Kymlicka, “Liberal Multiculturalism: Western Models, Global Trends, and Asian Debates,” in Will Kymlicka & Baogang He (eds.), *Multiculturalism in Asia* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press Inc., 2005), 22-55.

<sup>6</sup> Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: a Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 26.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

order to integrate better in the society. On the other hand, the latter often requires needs of political and territorial autonomy.

To ensure that group rights are justified in liberal principles, Kymlicka assesses the need of liberalism understanding that should not be restricted to universal individual rights. Rather, he aligns cultural accommodation with traditional liberal principles like freedom of expression, association, autonomy, and information.<sup>10</sup> Cultural membership is so important, because it ‘provides meaningful options’ and also ‘affects how others perceive and respond to us.’ Moreover, culture as a source of identification, is more secure because it depends on ‘belonging and not [on] achievement,’<sup>11</sup> and is directly related to our self-esteem and dignity. Therefore, ‘as long as polyethnic rights to immigrants and self-governmental rights to national minorities secure access to a societal culture, then they contribute to individual freedom.’<sup>12</sup>

Having discussed the citizenship of Surabaya, I cannot avoid the issue of migration. As the second biggest cities in Indonesia, Surabaya could be considered as mini-Indonesia because its citizenship is heterogeneous; comes from several ethnics and religious affiliations. Fong’s (2009) article of *immigration and its impacts on Canadian cities* draws the effect of migrant influx resulting in some issues, namely: citizenship, economic integration, unemployment, earnings, and racial-ethnic-economic stratification.<sup>13</sup> His work concludes that immigrants who come to a town with no qualified social capital leads to many problems for the local government rather than the benefit. In addition, immigrants with weak social capital will experience greater difficulty in the process of social integration with the local population than do they who has strong modal social. Although Fong’s work is far from Surabaya in which I conduct my research, I assume that most cities, not only Indonesia but also in the entire world, which has a lot of migrants will face the same

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>13</sup> Eric Fong, “Immigration and its Impacts on Canadian Cities,” in Guiliana B. Prato (ed.), *Beyond Multiculturalism: Views from Anthropology* (Surrey, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 39-55.

problems that Fong describes. Therefore, this article finds its legitimacy in mapping problems and issues around citizenship and migrant.

### **Some Evidence in the Field**

As a mini Indonesia, Surabaya city has population of various cultures, races and religions. Diverse ethnics migrate to Surabaya and build a community there. Therefore, Surabaya has Malay, China, India, Arabia and Europe in addition to the ethnics of Indonesian archipelago such as Madurese, Sundanese, Batak, Borneo, Bali, Celebes, and others that come and settle, live together and mingle with the native form of cultural pluralism which later become the hallmark of the city of Surabaya. The government of Surabaya is aware of this phenomenon, proud of it, and uses it as its tourism campaign. Evidently, through its official website ([www.surabaya.go.id](http://www.surabaya.go.id)), Surabaya government announces that Surabaya people (*Arek Soerabaya*) are egalitarian and open to the new comers from outside Surabaya.

Every May—which is the anniversary of Surabaya— Surabaya held a cultural parade and arts and cultural festival for the whole month. The theme of celebration is always related with cultural diversity in Surabaya. This year for instance, for the 719<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Surabaya, the government issues the theme “Hari Jadi Kota Surabaya ke-719: Semarak Surabaya dalam Keragaman Budaya” (719<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Surabaya: Lively Surabaya in Cultural Diversity). As usual, Surabaya enlivens the celebration of its anniversary with a cultural parade and arts and cultural festival during the month. This event is held in collaboration between the city government (the department of tourism and culture) and Surabaya arts council. The same festival is also held in Novembers to celebrate the day of Hero (Hari Pahlawan) by the two organizers above in cooperation with the Foundation of Art Festival of Surabaya.

Unfortunately, such cultural richness is no supported by the data and specific policy. The Department of Population and Civil of Surabaya government ([dispendukcapil.surabaya.go.id](http://dispendukcapil.surabaya.go.id)) or even Central Bureau of Statistic of Surabaya ([surabayakota.bps.go.id](http://surabayakota.bps.go.id)) does not have any record of statistical data on population of Surabaya based on ethnic and religion.

In addition, Surabaya government does not have a master plan of development (through RPJM/*Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah* or Mid-Term Development Plan) that focuses on inter-ethnic relations in Surabaya; and assigns the responsibility for implementation of the program related to cultural diversity to the department of tourism and culture. The only regulation related to the “outsider” is about governing population.

When I showed my findings to my interviewees, they justified them. According to my local and indie-citizen interviewees,<sup>14</sup> the festival is more like an annual project of the government than a maintaining the cultural diversity in Surabaya. Almost the participants are from outside Surabaya or those who work in art communities who were invited by or registered to the organizer; there is no citizen’s involvement in such a festive event. However, the opposite response comes from the migrants who has worked and lived in Surabaya for many years. They feel at home in Surabaya, an openness of its citizens, have good relationship with the government. My Ambonese interviewees, for instance, who are the member of KPPM (*Komite Perekat Persaudaraan Maluku*/Adhesives Committee of Maluku Brotherhood) in Surabaya, stated that the organization has a very good relationship with the government. They appointed the former Surabaya mayor Bambang DH as an honorary citizen of Moluccans, and have participated all Surabaya city agenda including the annual festival. Previously, the Pattimura day of May 15<sup>th</sup>—which is the honorary day of Moluccans— was celebrated in Surabaya by the government by appointing Pattimura road on May 20<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately, I cannot encounter the government principals to give an explanation on this situation.

Another tension occurs in political arena between local and indie citizens with migrants who have important positions in political parties and the representative house. Local citizens feel marginalized because almost all the important position occupied by migrants. My interviewee who is politician told me that he ever issued the citizenship matter in the annual meeting of the party. He forced the party to legalize the

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<sup>14</sup> I use this term to differentiate them from Surabaya citizens who are not *Arek Soerabaya* ethnically.

regulation of local identity (KTP) for the local parliament election. Although he failed to reach major agreement of the forum, he stated that he will always fight for “local citizen’s rights.”

The last tension occurs between the government and local citizens who concern in cultural and historical heritages of Surabaya. They blame the government because many historic buildings are leased to private parties. They argue that because almost the majors of Surabaya were not originally Surabaya citizen, so the elected majors had no sense of belonging towards cultural and historical heritages of Surabaya. Therefore, in the previous election, most local citizens had chosen Tri Rismaharini as a major of Surabaya due she is local citizen of Surabaya.

### **How Much Theories of Multicultural Citizenship Work**

First of all, lets me show my opinions about the local and indie-citizens of Surabaya. First, they become what Kymlicka stated as a national minority, although they are majority in figure, seeking for their citizenship rights. Having driven economically, politically and culturally by the migrants, the local citizens become resistant to them. However, such resistance does not lead to mass violence. Second, they are not quite ready with massive wave of immigration into Surabaya. The local citizens are being marginalized in periphery due to migrants who bought or rented their homeland. I found this when I visited some interviewees who prefer to rent their home and to live in the borders of Surabaya.

To some extent, I can assume that Surabaya is liberal enough that Kymlicka’s multicultural citizenship works. Basically Surabaya people are open and welcome to changes and diverse people coming into Surabaya. Such openness then establishes sole culture that becomes a trademark of Surabaya city. Local and indie-citizens of Surabaya and migrants feel free to express their cultural identity and associate with cultural/religious organization. Nonetheless, the way government imposes the idea of cultural parade and art festival shows that Surabaya is not liberal enough. Such intervention implies the lack of (local) citizen’s participation to the agenda.



On the other, I am quite suspicious to the government that does not want to intrude an issue on cultural diversities. I am skeptical whether the government is reluctant to get into issues of culture and religion as they are sensitive issue in the community or because the government is still influenced by New Order policies that avoid the issue of SARA (*suku, agama, ras, dan antargolongan*/ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup). Whatever the reason is, I found that (local) citizens are not comfortable with the activities of the festival which is held by the government because they are not involved within the agenda.

## **Conclusion**

When Kymlicka requires liberal society to establish a multicultural citizenship, I was somewhat hesitant to apply in the local context Surabaya. In my mere view, Surabaya and other cities in Indonesia are not cities with a liberal society because to some degree they are religious and appreciate the religiosity. However, my view has changed. I am enlightened that Kymlicka's understanding of liberalism is more about cultural accommodation with traditional liberal principle such as freedom of expression, association, autonomy, and information. In this sense, I argue that Kymlicka's multicultural citizenship works in mapping society and citizenship in Surabaya.

In sum, although Surabaya government has compelled the idea of cultural diversities through cultural parade and art festival, and although there is tension between local citizens and migrants in political and economic matters, multicultural citizenship works in Surabaya because the basic culture of *Arek Soerabaya* that are open and egalitarian. Otherwise, there will be mass violence between local citizens and migrants as it occurs in many parts of Indonesia.

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