

Civil Society:

Building Trust and Social Solidarity in the Public Sphere in the Perspective of Indonesia

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Abstract

This paper explores the history of civil society theory and its advancement in the context of social and mutual trust. Civil society as civic engagement opens rooms for criticizing political structure and bridging social groups. This article focuses on civic engagement ability to bonding a given community and bridging divers communities. Using an interdisciplinary perspective this article examines the development of civil society theory in the context of knowledge exposure. At the end part, this article explores two interreligious institutions in Indonesia to highlight the significance of civil society in the realm of interreligious relationship. As means of civil society association the institutions have bridged diverse communities in Indonesia and push Indonesia toward a more democratic state and peace nation.

Introduction

Civil society deals with the common good, social existence, and groups engagements. There is a plethora of civil society theory that related to market and economics issues, but in this paper sticks to civil society as mutual coexistence.¹ Civil society in this sense conveys the idea of social capital that leads to strong social ties and collective responsibility. It was Alexis Tocqueville, a French scholar who studied the society of the United States of America, who discovered the pattern of civil society in the American society as the means of common goods and social engagements, civic

¹Vaclav Havel, "Politics, Morality, and Civility" in *The Essential Civil Society Reader: The Classic Essays*, ed., Don E. Eberly (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 391.

association/organization. As a civic association, civil society requires social voluntarism and strong desire to work toward collective goals.²

Civil society is a public area for mutual engagement. Advancing Tocqueville's perspective of America voluntarism and social engagement, Robert Putnam argues that collective-mutual engagement is a social capital toward mutual coexistence.³ In this sense, civil society is a great searching for harmony, mutual understanding, and social cohesion. Jeffrey Alexander incorporates this model of civil society, while adding Jurgen Habermas' concept of "public sphere,"⁴ by infusing the concept of a civil sphere into social cohesion where one can find roots of civil society that relies on solidarity as a power to foster social order.⁵

The Sociological Nature of Civil Society

Although the civil society concept reached its peak in discussion, application, reflection as well as backlash in the 1980's, beginning with the publication of John Keane's masterpiece of "Civil Society and the State" in 1988, the idea of civil society goes back to Plato's, Aristotle's, and Cicero's times. In *The Republic*, Plato mapped out the common life and shared interest of society in his time. When Plato, in the *Republic*, cites good prudence, justice, and no harm vertically or horizontally in a city or state,⁶ he emphasizing respect and tolerance as basic requirements of a community life. On the same way, Aristotle, in *Politics*, argues that life in the polis depends on the mutual respect of the ruling and the ruled parties, or *koinonia politike*.⁷ Therefore, both Plato and Aristotle argue that civic life is the backbone of a society. In *Societas Civilis*, Cicero describes a model of society where civic power rules.⁸

Civil society theory varies according to the perspective one might employ. Jeffrey Alexander's division of civil society theory will be helpful to understanding the

² Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. Edited by Bruce Frohnen (Washington DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2002, Originally published in 1889), 39-40.

³ Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Touchstone, 2000), 297.

⁴ Luke Goode, *Jurgen Habermas: Democracy and Public Sphere* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 58.

⁵ Jeffrey Alexander, *The Civil Sphere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3.

⁶ Plato, *Six Great Dialogues: Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus, Symposium, and The Republic*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett (New York: Dover Publication, Inc., 2007), 183 - 460.

⁷ Aristotle, *Introduction to Aristotle*. Edited by Richard McKeon (New York: The Modern Library, 1947), 546 - 553

⁸ Khrisnan Khumar, "Civil Society: an Inquiry into the usefulness of an Historical Term." *The British Journal of Sociology* 44, no. 3 (September 1993): 375.

variety of civil society theories; Civil Society I, II, and III. Hobbes⁹ and Tocqueville's¹⁰ perspectives are the heart of Civil Society I, which is centered on voluntarism. Hegel's¹¹ and Marx's perspectives highlight that Civil Society II as based on market capital. Because the foundation of Civil Society III is solidarity, Ferdinand Toenies¹² and Jeffrey Alexander¹³ have presented the idea of solidarity and civil society. This article focuses more on Civil Society III.

Although the idea of civil society is rooted in ancient Greek philosophers (such as Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero),¹⁴ Hobbes is considered to be the father of the modern concept of civil society. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes demonstrates the power of civil society in the relationship of state and society. His civil society is centered on the fusion of state and religion. Civil society in Hobbes theory, as it quoted by John Ehrenberg, is the expression of social contract, "established by an act of voluntary and permanent agreement, it is the single expression of a common will..."¹⁵ When it comes to state and to private relationships, Hobbes believes that civil society is the synthetic terrain of the public sphere and self-interest. Considering social contracts, civil society perhaps needs a Leviathan - a strong government -but it should into consideration the "private realm and individual desire."¹⁶

Unlike Hobbes, who focuses on voluntarism and agreement in civil society, Hegel based his study of civil society on materialism. To Hegel, civil community, to use his term, is a social realm that is constituted of three elements:

- A. The recasting of want, and the satisfaction of the individual through his work, through the work of all others, and through the satisfaction of their wants. This is a system of wants.
- B. Actualization of the general freedom required for this, *i.e.*, the protection of property by the administration of justice.

⁹ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*. With Selected Variants from the Latin edition of 1668. Edited by Edwin Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1994).

¹⁰ Alexis Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 35 – 43.

¹¹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*. Translated by S. W. Dyde (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2005).

¹² Ferdinand Toenies, *Community and Society: Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1957).

¹³ Jeffrey Alexander, *The Civil Sphere* (New York: The Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁴ Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (New Baskerville: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1992).

¹⁵ John Ehrenberg, *Civil Society: The Critical History of an Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 74.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.

C. Provision against possible mischances, and care for the particular interest as a common interest, by means of police and the corporation.¹⁷

Although Hegel reconciles “liberal individualism and civic republicanism,” his civil society based heavily on the role of market capital. His civil society is:

still a combination of markets and so-called corporations, together with a public authority responsible for the task of policing and justice....one which retained some elements of the markets and corporations of civil society (*sensu stricto*), but in which public authority had become a much more complex and developed apparatus (the political state) with the bureaucracy playing the key role in that apparatus.¹⁸

Two years after Tocqueville published his magnum opus, *Democracy in America*, Karl Marx uses Hegel’s civil community market-based idea to reject de Tocqueville’s concept of civil society.¹⁹ Khrisna Kumar argues that Marx’s civil society as nothing but the slavery of market and capital interests. He quotes Marx, “the social practices and social institutions of civil society could be no more than the forms in which the essential life of capitalist society, the economic life, was played out.”²⁰ Developed from Marx’s materialistic civil society, Cohen and Arato link civil society to markets and economics. For them, no one can understand civil society outside of state and economic processes.²¹ Marx’s reduction of the civil society into merely a materialistic realm is different from other sociologist’ approaches and concepts of civil society.

Contemporary civil society theorists such as Alexander and Seligman who follow the footsteps of Durkheim, Parson, Tonnies and Tocqueville, understand civil society as a sphere where people communicate with each other ethically and peacefully through trust and solidarity as social capital. Even though Durkheim did not mention civil society explicitly in his works, the whole structures of his theory of solidarity has led scholars in sociology and political science to draw on theories of civil society. In *The Division of Labor in Society*, Durkheim stresses that a society suffers because of the

¹⁷ G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 159.

¹⁸ Victor Perez-Diaz, “The Possibility of Civil Society: Traditions, Character, and Challenge” in *Civil Society: The Theory, History, Comparison*, ed., John A. Hall (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 96-97.

¹⁹ Khrisna Kumar, “Civil Society: An Inquiry into the usefulness of an historical term.” *British Journal of Sociology* 44, no. 3 (September 1993): 378.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 380.

²¹ Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, ix.

absence of cohesion and regulation.²² What he meant by cohesion is social solidarity as a foundation of civil society. Durkheim understands that social solidarity ties a community together through the existence of collective consciousness that lies on common interest. Anchored on Durkheim's works, Mustafa Emirbayer describes Durkheim's civil society as "the sphere of social life outside the state and economy that is organized around the principle of solidarity and that encompasses such organizations, voluntary associations, and mediating bodies as occupational groups, the family, and educational institutions."²³

Durkheim insists that solidarity and moral aspects are the backbone of civil society. Adam Seligman and Jeffrey Alexander, two key scholars in the modern study of civil society, base their studies on Durkheim's solidarity and moral concepts. Seligman emphasizes ethical aspects of social engagement as the pivotal elements of civil society.²⁴ Alexander, meanwhile, although he also underlines Durkheim's ethical point of view, believes that civil society depends on the influence of civil solidarity and justice.²⁵ In *Civil Society III*, which he argues as his personal point of view, Alexander says:

Civil society should be conceived as a solidarity sphere, in which a certain kind of universalizing community comes to be culturally defined and to some degree institutionally enforced. To the degree that this solidarity community exists, it is exhibited and sustained by public opinion, deep cultural codes, distinctive organizations – legal, journalistic and associational – and such historically specific interactional practices as civility, criticism, and mutual respect.²⁶

Echoing Alexander, Michael Edwards argues that *Civil Society III* in Alexander's perspective is spawned upon a normative foundation. This civil society is a good society where people believe in values and attitudes such as non-violence, cooperation, trust, and tolerance.²⁷ These values and attitudes produce a good civil society because a civil

²² Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, xxxv.

²³ Mustafa Emirbayer, ed., *Emile Durkheim: Sociologist of Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 217.

²⁴ Adam B. Seligman, *The Idea of Civil Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 125.

²⁵ Jeffrey Alexander, *The Civic Sphere*, 386.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁷ Michael Edwards, *Civil Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 37-52.

society is “a society that is civil.”²⁸ In the discussion of good society, these attitudes and values create a sense of voluntarism in a given society that is “the gene-carriers of the good society.”²⁹

However, unlike Alexander, Edwards understands three models of civil society in an integrated manner. For Edwards, civil society is non-governmental organization, based on voluntarism that creates a public sphere for mutual understanding. Civil society includes “grass-root groups, non-profit intermediaries and membership associations”³⁰ that promote collective goals, cross-society coalitions, mutual accountability and shared reflection. Thus, in Edward’s theory, Civil Society has three important roles:³¹ first, civil society as association of life. “Civil society is the world of voluntary associations that act as “gene carriers” for developing values such as tolerance and cooperation.”³² Second, civil society as the good society. “The second role sets this rich associational life in context, fostering positive norms...”³³ The third role is civil society as the public sphere. In this last role, civil society plays an important role in searching for the common interest of a given community. “Civil society as an arena for public deliberation, rational dialogue and the exercise of active citizenship in pursuit of the common interest – in other words, as the public sphere.”³⁴

Building upon Jurgen Habermas’ concept of the public sphere, Edwards states that civil society as a public sphere became an arena for debate and deliberation as well as for association and institutional collaboration. Here political and social interests are developed and debated. However, the goal of debate and argument in the public sphere is the common good.³⁵ Debate and argument is the way a communicative action comes into being in a given society. Communicative action and the morality of public consciousness is the spirit of a public sphere.³⁶ It transforms the public sphere from a *burgeliche Offentlichkeit* (bourgeois public sphere), belonging to the elite as a public

²⁸ Ibid., 39.

²⁹ Ibid., 41.

³⁰ Ibid., 32.

³¹ Ibid., 32

³² Christoph Spurk, “Understanding Civil Society” in *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment*, ed., Thania Paffenholz, 22.

³³ Ibid., 22.

³⁴ Michael Edwards, *Civil Society*, viii.

³⁵ Michael Edwards, *Civil Society*, 55.

³⁶ Jurgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*. Translated by Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Webe Nicholse (Cambridge: the MIT Press, 1990), 116.

good under the status of *libertatis, civitatis, familie, and naturalis*.³⁷ Although, according to Habermas, civil society is developed according to Hegel's and Marx's economic and market spirit, he mentions that civil society is a place where government has no way to control society. Under a critical public engagement through communicative action, civil society becomes a public sphere free of coercion and violence. Th communicative action brings mutual understanding to the public sphere because, "communication makes a possible a kind of understanding that is based on claims to validity and thus furnishes the only real alternative to exerting influence on one another in more or less coercive ways."³⁸ To sum up Habermas' idea, civil society should take place within the communicative process in the construction of a public sphere.

Based on his reading of Habermas and research on the Chinese democratic struggle, Richard Madsen, another civil society's theorist, argues, "public sphere and civil society be defined in such a way as to focus on the moral and cultural dimensions of contemporary social transformation."³⁹ In Madsen's theory, a democratic public sphere arises from "civil society." For Madsen, a democratic public sphere develops from below, from a voluntarily organized citizenry, it does not emerge from the realm of a benevolent state or elite.⁴⁰ Only when a particular society has a strong public sphere can come into being in the realm of civic engagement.

Social Capital in Civil Society

Civic engagement requires massive social capital to create the strong bond of mutual respect and an ability to work closely with one another. Francis Fukuyama understands social capital as "an instantiated informal norm that promotes co-operation between two or more individuals."⁴¹ Robert Putman's study of civic engagement and social association concludes that social capital includes "features of social life –networks, norms and trust – that enable participants to act more effectively

³⁷ Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Translated by Thomas Burger with the Assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991), 75.

³⁸ Jurgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, 19.

³⁹ Richard Madsen, "The Public Sphere, Civil Society, and Moral Community: A Research Agenda for Contemporary Chinese Study." *Modern China* 19, no. 2 (April 1993): 185.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 186.

⁴¹ Francis Fukuyama, "Social Capital, Civil Society and Development." *Third World Quarterly* 22, no 1 (2001): 7.

to pursue shared objectives.”⁴² In short, social capital for Putnam refers to “social connections and attendant norms and trust.”⁴³ When a community has robust social capital, the community will embrace intimacy, affection, warmth and mutual concern.

Social capital is one of the most important elements of civil society. Only because of massive social capital civil society can nurture associative life, community communal life. In civil society, we share common interests and hobbies and ‘bowl’ together, to use Putnam’s evocative image.⁴⁴ In a community, we celebrate common festivals, grieve together, holiday together, or spend Christmas together. ‘Bowling alone’ represents the decline of civil society; grieving or spending Christmas alone, apart from community.

Putnam has based his approach to social capital on de Tocqueville’s concept of associational life. In this association, people join with others who share similar thoughts and values to address common concerns.⁴⁵ As for de Tocqueville, Putnam believes the association, which leads to civic engagement, is the heart of democratic life. In addition, it is also massive social capital that contributes to the formation of civil society. For Putnam, people’s connection with life is not merely politics. Non-political civic engagement may also promote civic education, strengthening civil skills, and bridging communities.⁴⁶ Putnam’s analysis of religious exclusion and inclusion in America concludes that religion can serve as form of social capital if it is open to other recognizable people from other religions and connects the adherents of other religions in a strong social engagement.⁴⁷

Social engagement is the way people accept other groups, including other religions, because only through social engagement can one trust outsiders. As a social capital refers to “social networks, norms of reciprocity, mutual assistance, and trustworthiness,”⁴⁸ a society needs to strongly engage in many relationships. In a similar vein to Putnam, John Coleman argues:

⁴² Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 665.

⁴³ Robert Putnam, “Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America.” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 28, No. 4 (December 1995): 664 -683

⁴⁴ Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, 149.

⁴⁵ Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Tradition in Modern Italy*, 86.

⁴⁶ Robert Putnam, “Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America,” 667-669.

⁴⁷ Robert Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2010), 443 – 492.

⁴⁸ Robert Putnam and Lewis D. Feldstein, *Better Together: Restoring the American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2004), 2.

Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence. Like physical capital and human capital, social capital is not completely fungible, but fungible in respect to specific activities....Unlike other forms of capital, social capital inheres in the structure of relation between persons and among persons.⁴⁹

Both Putnam and Coleman believe that social capital is the heart of civil society and that the bulk of civic engagement requires a common action to bridge people from different social groups within one community. Coleman reminds his reader that social capital can harm other groups if it is not situated under a mutual understanding that advances trustworthiness.⁵⁰ In the case of Klux Klan in the history of American society, or the Muslim Brotherhood in the Muslim world, Coleman's argument finds the truth that social capital and group solidarity can have negative purposes that may hurt other people.

The negative side of social capital is created in the realm of social cohesion because of the narrowness of "the radius of trust."⁵¹ Francis Fukuyama addresses the previously mentioned slippery side of social capital by arguing that social groups need to enlarge their 'radius of trust'. The radius of trust brings about the idea of engaging deeply with other groups, based on "shared norms and using these norms to achieve cooperative ends." Fukuyama adds, "if a group's social capital produces positive externalities, the radius of trust can be larger than the group itself."⁵² Rooted in de Tocqueville's art of association, Fukuyama's articulation of social capital finds that a community can come as a strong association to participate in the search for common good only by coming together in civic association. Borrowing from Bourdieu, this state of mind creates a habitus and field of social relationships.⁵³ The habitus, or feeling for the game of social cohesion, has fostered a strong foundation for mutual understanding and respect. Although Bourdieu relies rather heavily on an economic metaphor, his

⁴⁹ James S. Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory* (Cambridge: First Harvard University Press, 1994), 302.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 303.

⁵¹ Lawrence Harrison, *Underdevelopment in a State of Mind: The Latin American Case* (New York: Madison Books, 1985), 7.

⁵² Francis Fukuyama, *Social Capital, Civil Society and Development*, 7 – 20.

⁵³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 152 - 165.

theory of field does not articulate financial capita but rather, social capital. When a strong civic association and large “radius of trust” become the habitus of a community, the field of social capital can strengthen civic engagements.

To sum up, social capital is as integral part of the idea of strengthening group cohesion and bridging groups within a community. In elaboration of de Tocqueville’s association theory and focused on Putnam, Fukuyama, and Coleman’s social capital perspectives, the World Bank understands social capital in five dimensions:

- Groups and networks – collections of individuals that promote and protect personal relationships which improve welfare,
- Trust and solidarity – elements of interpersonal behavior which foster greater cohesion and more robust collective action;
- Collective action and cooperation – ability of people to work together toward resolving communal issues;
- Social cohesion and Inclusion –mitigates the risk of conflict and promotes equitable access to benefits of development by enhancing participation of the marginalized; and
- Information and Communication –breaks down negative social capital and also enables positive social capital by improving access of information.⁵⁴

Social capital in a good society⁵⁵ creates “the habit of heart and mind” of civil society, according to de Tocqueville. Trust and solidarity, connection, collective action and collaboration shape the social habit civic engagement. Communication, as the means of shared values and norms, is important to foster understanding and mutual trust. Habermas points out that communicative action brings people together as a community of trustworthiness.⁵⁶

Civil Society in Interreligious Engagement in Indonesia

Scholars’ writings on civil society and religions in Indonesia are centered on the non-governmental and non-market efforts in bringing democracy and peace to the

⁵⁴ Marilyn Taylor, *Public Policy in the Community*. Second Edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 56.

⁵⁵ Borrowed from Robert Bellah’s Good Society. Robert Bellah, et., al., *The Good Society* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 7 - 10.

⁵⁶ Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two: Lifeworld and System: A Critiques of Functionalist Reason*. Translated by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 72.

nation. Ward Berenschot,⁵⁷ Robert W. Hefner,⁵⁸ and Florian Pohl⁵⁹ are among scholars who describe Indonesian Civil Society as the pattern of non-governmental association. Benschot has described Islamic “substantialist and scripturalist” debates on peace and pluralism in Indonesia. He argues that Islamic puritan groups such as Hisbu Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia (KAMMI), and Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS), with money from the Arab world, have tirelessly fought for the purification of Islam, which, according to these groups, means going back to Arabic culture.⁶⁰ By the same token, Hefner has found out that in the struggle for democracy of the middle class in Indonesia, conflict between has risen between fundamental Muslim groups, like the Masyumi, and the progressive Muslim scholars, such as Nurcholis Majid and Abdurrahman Wahid.⁶¹ Hefner also illustrates Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia (ICMI), a Muslim non-government organization in Soeharto’s era, in the conflict with *abangan*⁶² scholars on the political stage.⁶³

Unlike Hefner and Benschot, who focused on formal organizations and political aspects of civil society in Indonesia, Pohl focuses his study on the role of *pesantren* (Muslim boarding school) in establishing tolerance and pluralism. He questions the role of *pesantrens* in Solo, Central Java, in relation to anti-violence education, peace, inter-ethnic tolerance. For Pohl, civil society is not only a political business, but also the endeavor of people at the grass-root level.⁶⁴ Although Pohl does not touch the aspect of social solidarity and the web of trust in civil society, Pohl’s study provides a perspective on the rudimentary association in the everyday activities of interreligious engagements.

⁵⁷ Ward Berenschot, *Engaging the Faithful: Pluralism, Civil Society and Religious Identity in Indonesia* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2011), 8.

⁵⁸ Robert W. Hefner, “Islam, State, and Civil Society: ICMI and the Struggle for the Indonesian Middle Class.” *Indonesia* 56 (October 1993): 1 -35.

⁵⁹ Florian Pohl, “Islamic Education and Civil Society: Reflections on the Pesantren Tradition in Contemporary Indonesia.” *Comparative Education Review* 50, no. 3 (August 2006): 389 – 409.

⁶⁰ Ward Berenschot, *Engaging the Faithful: Pluralism, Civil Society and Religious Identity in Indonesia*, 9.

⁶¹ Robert W. Hefner, “Islam, State, and Civil Society: ICMI and the Struggle for Indonesian Middle Class,” 5.

⁶² In his study on the religion of Java, Clifford Geertz has divided Muslims in Java into three categories; Abangan (non devoted Muslims), Santri (devoted Muslims), and Priyayi (Muslims from noble families). See Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (New York: Free Press, 1960).

⁶³ Robert W. Hefner, Islam, “State, and Civil Society: ICMI and the Struggle for Indonesian Middle Class,” 10.

⁶⁴ Florian Pohl, “Islamic Education and Civil Society: Reflections on the Pesantren Tradition in Contemporary Indonesia,” 389-391.

The study and practice of civil society has ample room for the engagement of religious adherents of different faiths. The solidarity aspect of civil society helps strengthen social relationships and creates mutual trust, tolerance, and respect which form the basic foundations for interreligious engagement.⁶⁵ The description of civil society leads to the analysis of its contribution to interreligious engagement and vice versa. My observation on two Indonesian interfaith institutions -- Dian Interfidei in Yogyakarta and Lembaga Antar Iman (LAIM) --concludes that these institutions are among the pillars of Indonesian civil society for interfaith engagements. These two institutions have been working for interreligious engagements as part of peacebuilding process that fosters the role of civil society in two different parts of Indonesia. Dian Interfidei has served interfaith engagement in Java for more than a decade, while Lembaga Antar Iman was established recently following the peacebuilding efforts after the Christian-Muslim conflict in Maluku.

Both Interfidei and Lembaga have been working to protect the right of religious belief. Interfidei works as a non-government organization that protects the right to religious life in Java. In many cases this Yogya-based institution protects community and individual rights to believe in any religious affiliation.⁶⁶ LAIM activities tell a different story, as in the Malukan peacebuilding process, after the Christian-Muslim conflict in 1999-2002, the government could not stop the conflict and was unable to protect people. Rather, conflict came to an end when society started a culturally based approach to robust social cohesion among indigenous Malukans and a bridged relationship with other immigrants who have come to live in Maluku. The aim to foster social cohesion has been stated clearly in the third poin of LAIM's vision statement, "To improve the functional, positive, creative, and constructive interactions among religious communities."⁶⁷

Interfidei plays a significant this civil society function in Indonesia. Its program is to educate religious teachers of junior and senior high schools in Java to enable the interfaith institution to build tolerance, mutual understanding and trust among

⁶⁵ Adel Daher, "Democracy, Pluralism and Political Islam" in *The Challenge of Pluralism: Paradigms from Muslim Contexts*, eds., Abdou Filali Ansary and Sikeena Karmali (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 64.

⁶⁶ Dian Interfidei's institutional profile in <http://interfidei.or.id/index.php?page=about&id=1> accessed on January 4, 2013 at 10.55 AM.

⁶⁷ Lembaga Antar Iman Maluku (Malukan Interfaith Institution) website <http://lembagaantarimanmaluku.wordpress.com/about/visi-misi/> accessed on September 30, 2012 at 5.52 pm.

religious communities.⁶⁸ The curriculum that Interfidei has provided to teachers is different from the formally oriented curriculum coming off the government's desk. The Indonesian government through the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education produces unjust policies that tend to put interfaith engagement into jeopardy.⁶⁹ The compulsion to teach student according to their own religion without room for dialoging with other faiths has led to disputes among educators and scholars. Ina Merjanova and Patrice Brodeur have pointed out, from their research on interreligious dialogue and peacebuilding in the Balkans, that the communist party under Tito saw interreligious interactions as a threat. Therefore, government produced a bill that pushed interreligious communities away from engagement. According to the Merdajonova and Brodeur, this is one of reasons why conflict in the Balkans came into being. In the Indonesian context, institutions such as Interfidei help to balance unjust governmental policy with non-governmental action, which leads toward mutual understanding and trust.⁷⁰

Building on one of the Malukan real interfaith engagements through Pela Gandong⁷¹ relationships, LAIM has crafted interfaith voluntary programs that provide room for Muslim and Christian communities to come together to clean mosques and churches. This activity helps to strengthen social capital and social solidarity among Malukans who have grown up with the idea of "orang basudara" (The kinship of Malukans) and "ale rasa beta rasa" (a shared feeling among Malukans). The program that includes local Malukans and immigrants, mostly youths, has developed a communal bridge between indigenous Malukans, Christians and Muslims, and also with the children of immigrant community who live within the Malukan host society. The bottom line is, the program has created a space for inclusion among Malukans and has helped to build bridges between Malukans with Muslims and Christians, immigrants, who moved

⁶⁸ I borrow Liam Gearon's idea of interreligious engagement, education and human rights. Liam Gearom, "Inter-religious Education for Citizenship and Human Rights" in *International Handbooks of Inter-Religious Education Part One*, eds., Kath Engebretson, et., al (London and New York: Springer, 2010), 861 – 863.

⁶⁹ Muhammad Sirozi, "Secular-religious based debates on the Indonesian National Education System: Colonial Legacy and a Search for National Identity in Education." *Intercultural Education* 15, no. 2 (2004): 123 - 137.

⁷⁰ Ina Merdijjanova and Patrice Brodeur, *Religion as a Conversation Starter: Interreligious Dialogue for Peacebuilding in Balkans*, 35.

⁷¹ Relationships among negeri (local community) in Maluku, mostly between Christian and Muslim negeri, whose ancestors, long ago, had established the relationships based upon the genealogical or non-geological relationships among the negeri.

to Maluku decades ago. Through Interfidei and LAIM massive socialization, people learn to improve the level of tolerance, mutual respect, and trust. Although these values of religious pluralism and the backbone of interfaith engagement have been practiced by the people of Indonesia in their daily lives, government policy and teachings of elite religious clergy have put interfaith engagements in jeopardy. The Interfaith Camp for Teenagers is one of Interfidei's programs to bring teenagers together in order to learn how to respect and trust people of other faiths. LAIM has been more radical, with in the idea of bringing post-conflict Muslim and Christian communities together. LAIM, through its interaction program, has developed a "home stay" program by which the youth of Christian communities live for a couple of days in Muslim houses, and vice versa. The idea behind this home stay is to provide the youths with a radical encounter with people who they used to believe as the enemy. To borrow from Ruc Reychler and Thania Paffenholz,⁷² this is the way LAIM helps to overcome the enemy image and re exchange it with a friendly image, through the experience of living together with people from other faiths.

Conclusion

In a democratic society, interreligious engagement or dialogue may strengthen the existence of civil society. In the sense that both civil society and interreligious engagement need solidarity and mutual understanding, the commitment of non-violence, respect, tolerance, and voluntarism in civil society is also a foundation of interreligious engagement. Civil society is not only a space outside of government and market or civic association, but the essence of civil society is solidarity among people in the particular society. Thus, civil society requires communication to reach mutual understanding to create a public sphere that free of coercion and violence.

In everyday interreligious engagement or dialogue, people may employ multiple means of encounter including everyday communication, song, poetry, and ritual performance. Interreligious engagement or dialogue on a daily basis is based on people's ordinary activities and common relationships. Therefore the engagement includes many people, not only the elite, in a given society. As it covers multiple layers and people, everyday interreligious engagement provides room for women and children, who have been excluded from the formal male-dominated dialogue. Therefore

⁷² Luc Reychler and Thania Paffenholz, eds., *Peacebuilding: a Field Guide*, xv.

in everyday dialogue, all people are able to share, speak, perform, listen, and understand. In the interfaith peacebuilding process in many countries, everyday interreligious engagement could open up the gate of reconciliation and build a genuine and strong interfaith peace. Everyday dialogue needs the common ground of people creating solidarity and mutual understanding among people who hold different beliefs and faiths.

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