



## Beyond the Modernity: Remaking Social Order in the Post-COVID-19

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### Introduction

The world is currently experiencing a new phase of the entire journey over a year facing the COVID-19 pandemic. Many countries are now starting vaccination programs to obtain herd immunity, expect to recover activities, and back to run as usual as long before the pandemic. The developed countries dominantly initiate the vaccine mass-production, thereby is a key in accelerating the vaccination upon the population all over the world. All those vaccine producer companies are Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer from the United States, BioNTech from Germany, AstraZeneca from the UK, and only China, through Sinovac Biotech Ltd, can produce the vaccine from a moderate developing country. Consequently, many countries are now racing in the effort to purchase their product in huge numbers and build diplomatic negotiation of both Business-to-Business (B2B) or technology transfer schemes. Therefore, this race has led to disparities complication due to the vaccine availability for emerging countries. In which those countries have been stuck in dealing with the pandemic.<sup>1</sup> The recent study issued by John Hopkins University, predicted it would take more than ten years for Indonesia to nationwide recover from COVID-19 regarding the slow daily vaccination rates of 60.433 doses a day, compared to the vaccine-producer countries that take less than a year.<sup>2</sup>

In order to achieve herd immunity, the vaccination programs should approximately cover 60-70% of the population.<sup>3</sup> Referring to that study, as mentioned earlier, it needs to vaccinate at least 162 million

1 Take a look WHO commentaries criticizing the inequality vaccine distribution plan on BBC investigation

2 There is an academic debate upon the study due to the lack of data published by Bloomberg which doesn't correlate to the real-time number of hospitals, public health centres, and health clinics in Indonesia.

3 The percentage refers to Dr. Anthony S. Fauci's remark, he estimated the vaccination takes around 60-70% over the population in December 2020. He first estimated 70-75%, then restated in the CNBC interview, of 75, 80, 85% and 75 to 80% and above.



Indonesians. Nevertheless, individuals should realize the invention of vaccines is one of the dozens of puzzles of so-called modernity. This biomedical technology has been evolving rapidly and set up as a restart button from the whole disaster of COVID-19, which affected daily activities, including social, economic, education, health, and public policy aspects. Therefore, this paper aims to predict social order in the aftermath of the pandemic, specifically in Indonesia. The analysis includes on shall individuals turn back into normal activities as before COVID-19? Or will there be a new behaviour, and what medium will it be through post-COVID19? In answering those questions, this paper elaborates and discusses both hyperreality and modernity concepts.<sup>4</sup>

## The Fall of Symbolic Illusion

Before the COVID-19 outbreak hit the world in late December 2019,<sup>5</sup> individuals actually lived under the shape of pseudo-reality. The argument reflects a luxurious lifestyle that shows the opposite to basic needs, which according to Maslow in McLeod (2007), consist only of physiological needs such as clothes, food, shelter, and safety needs (security and safety).<sup>6</sup> A sociologist and contemporary philosopher, Jean Baudrillard, defined that circumstance as semiotics.<sup>7</sup> In semiotics, something that tends to be a sign of glorification symbol can be used to lie, and it would be further constructed into meaning and signification dimension. In brief, that circumstance brings into a particular state of unnecessarily consuming a less essential product.

Individuals are inarguably having the desire to collect as many as possible resources to elevate their status. Individuals are addicted to consuming symbols in which Baudrillard (1994) identified as hyperreality.<sup>8</sup> The drives over-consumption under the influence of symbols leads to a luxurious lifestyle named a hyperreality concept. Individuals are unconsciously hypnotized to branded stuff which is nothing but merely a symbol. The prominent examples are their willingness to collect bags, jewellery, clothes, handphones, and fancy vehicles like Euro-imported cars. Also, for the only instance in daily activities, some individuals used to have a coffee made by a premium coffee shop for Rp. 50.000 in approximate. Did we question why we willingly pay that much for a cup of coffee? We could assume its real price is around Rp. 10.000 only, hence the remaining of Rp. 40.000 is the cost we purchase for the symbol of the coffee shop. That price is considered a hyperreality.

The fallacy-taken in those kinds of business as they put forward imaginary satisfaction into their core business to offer. We thereby assume that those branded coffee shops and similar industries are

4 Hyperreality is a sociology notion in which individual's consciousness is unprecedented driven to over consume symbols by way having branded-luxurious items to gain a higher social status





selling food and drink, but actually, they are not. The constructed symbol which turns into reality is their primary business. But when COVID-19 spread worldwide, it unintendedly stopped. By imposing large-scale social restriction (PSBB) in Jakarta on 10 April 2020 and has been continuously extended three times up to 4 June 2020, social mobility is strictly limited. A business range was closed and arranged into telecommuting in which employees are working remotely from home, while companies supplying essential needs were permitted.

Before the outbreak, elevating social status by way of spending money in the mall was common activity, but people consciously prioritized their health safety instead of consumptive satisfaction while PSBB imposed. As a result, Jakarta mall tenants losses Rp. 200 T,<sup>9</sup> It is a setback for hyperrealist industries. Pandemic deemed a reboot button, a turning back-point to regular activity. People slowly realized that they lived under the false reality, i.e. symbol glorifying, thereby promoting social status's unnecessary acknowledgement. In the end, people have been unimportantly putting imaginary needs forward much more significant than they should be throughout time. Ironically, the PSBB temporarily demolishes symbolic illusion.

## **Social Order and the Way Forward**

No one basically knows what and how society shall thrive post-pandemic.<sup>10</sup> The biggest lesson learned from this pandemic is that what occurs to one person can dramatically affect others, even in the planet's distant place. Thus, it is essential to pull together, yet to someone, we do not know. In the sociological view, COVID-19 could cut through time and space, thereby restructuring towards indefinite social relations. Consequently, the whole dynamic pattern of both actions and social relations shall be soon borderless, including the technological transformation phenomenon on how people communicate from real into a virtual dimension, which is a new sense ahead. Giddens (1994) defined those nature as high-modernity.<sup>11</sup>

Modernity induces dependence between humans and technology. Indeed, the use of technology, such as artificial intelligence, makes the activities much more straightforward and faster, but on the other hand, provokes a risk. In high-modernity measurement, the social transformation turns as rapid and radical as those cultures. Therefore, it affected the economics, education aspects simultaneously followed the technology side-by-side. The danger, as mentioned earlier, is known as late-modernity in determining policy sectors of both national and local level due to the gap between modernization and public policy reform.





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The gap has caused concerns from the scientists who are, at the same time, not so much involved in the national policy-making process. It can be seen when at the beginning of the pandemic, the government likely denied any proposed scientific recommendations, including the city lockdown proposal from the Council of Professors of the FKUI,<sup>12</sup> high cost of PPE protested by Indonesian General Practitioners Association (PDUI),<sup>13</sup> the study of Indonesian Society of Internal Medicine (PAPDI) upon the early herd-immunity option,<sup>14</sup> and recommendation of Indonesian Medical Association (IDI) on national vaccination programs.<sup>15</sup> This government's ignorance therefore amplifies the government's inability as they should have responded quickly in the mitigation phase to prevent cost-swelling which has spent over Rp. 905,1 T<sup>16</sup> while it should have only spent around Rp. 550 M a day if Jakarta imposed lockdown beforehand.<sup>17</sup> Thus, right after the pandemic, policymakers are urged to respond to the modern acceleration adaptively.

## Conclusion

In the aftermath of COVID-19, people shall significantly experience new social behaviour to put forward their primary needs over the imaginary ones. The symbol imaginary-based industries would be most shocked up due to the fast modernity that disenchant individuals away from hyperreality. However, the pandemic also drives modernity even stronger. Thereupon tends to technology dependence which socially reconstructs interaction and relationship patterns among societies. In response to this, the government is urged to adaptively accelerate bureaucracy reform regarding social digitalization and involve scientists responding to social relations recovery and each policy-taken.





## Endnotes

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