Digital Affective Citizenship: @The nexus of on-line and off-line anti-corruption activism in Banten, Indonesia
Fauzanafi, M.Z.

Citation
Fauzanafi, M. Z. (2024, April 4). *Digital Affective Citizenship: @The nexus of on-line and off-line anti-corruption activism in Banten, Indonesia*. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3731349

Version:	Publisher's Version
License:	Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden
Downloaded from:	https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3731349

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Chapter Six

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have examined the nexus of on-line and off-line anti-corruption activism in Banten, set against the historical background of anti-corruption activism in Indonesia and in comparison, with the discourse of (anti) corruption of national CSO (Civil Society Organization) and anti-corruption off-line mobilization of Malang Corruption Watch (MCW) in Malang, East Java. To study this nexus, I have asked this main question: why did intense online anti-corruption activism in Banten fail to generate effective offline mobilization? This question was followed by more detailed questions: What discourses of corruption are constructed through online anti-corruption activism at both local (Banten) and national levels? How is anti-corruption activism in Banten being practiced online? How is online anti-corruption activism reflective of the character of citizenship in Banten? And, to what extent, can this online anti-corruption activism be transformed (or not transformed) into strong off-line mobilization?

To provide some historical background, in Chapter 2, I followed the trajectory of the various anti-corruption modes of organizing in Indonesia from the New Order to reformasi and the second reformasi decade. I identified three prominent forms of organizing: student movements, CSO programmatic actions and social-media activism. These three forms of anti-corruption organizing might all be considered effective in pushing the government to set up anti-corruption policies/laws, institutions, and save the new institution (KPK) from the attacks of predatory elites. However, they did not succeed in curtailing corruption itself, that is indicated by Indonesia's levels of corruption that have not changed, or even worst.

In Chapter 3, I sought to answer the first question of this dissertation: what discourses of corruption are constructed through online anti-corruption activism at both provincial (Banten) and national levels? I made a comparison between the discourse of corruption in social media campaigning anti-corruption in Banten with social media of anti-corruption CSOs on a national level. At a national level, in social media anti-corruption campaigns that are mostly organized by formal and programmatic CSOs, corruption is dominantly constructed as a legal discourse. Whereas in Banten, corruption in social media anti-corruption campaigns, it is predominantly constructed by means of a moral emotional discourse related to religion with the expectation of what a 'good leader' should do.

In Chapter 4, I answered the questions of how anti-corruption activism in Banten is being practiced online? I argue that online anti-corruption activism in Banten is practiced through digital acts of reporting and sharing news on corruption and digital acts of flaming to resist the Banten political dynasty that is deemed to be corrupt. Through these digital acts, activist-citizens of Banten are conducting, what I have called: 'online indirect activism'. This is a mode of resistance in which activist-citizens of Banten emotionally attempt to activate other citizens to initiate their own resistance. I argue that the digital acts of reporting and sharing news on corruption have provoked readers and members of the three Facebook page and groups to perform digital acts of flaming toward the Banten political dynasty that regarded corrupt. Through these digital acts, citizens of Banten direct their feelings of anger, hate, passion and disgust about their corrupt leaders. From this encounter between citizens and the (agents of) state by enacting digital acts that are filled with emotions or affect emerged a political subjectivity that I have called "digital affective citizenship".

For the question of how is online anti-corruption activism reflective of

the character of citizenship in Banten? I identified a particular characteristic of digital affective in Banten: “powerless angry citizens”. This characteristic of citizenship reflects the struggle of emotional citizens who have a desire to affect political outcomes through engaging with a crucial political issue (corruption), but who feel they are powerless and lack the necessary capacities in effectively influencing or taking responsibility for political affairs of their polity, i.e. curtailing corrupt leaders.

The powerlessness of angry Banten citizens can be understood as a result of the mismatch between their desire for reigning in their corrupt leaders and the limitations of participatory channels and organizations at their disposal which can effectively lead to such curtailment. Moreover, powerless angry citizens can also be interpreted as a character of citizenship shaped by moral-emotional discourse of corruption inspired by local Islamic value that frame corrupt leaders as sinners who can be only brought down by God’s punishment and not by people or institutional power.

This moral-emotional discourse also constitutes the core characteristic of digital affect culture (Döveling, Harju, & Sommer, 2018). Digital affect culture can be defined as “the assemblage of those discourses within which emotions come to be,” and social sharing is a key element of online discourse that contributes to this (McCarthy, 1994:277). According to Markham (2004), the digital world is a unique discursive space where participation and orientation are determined by emotional interaction chains (see Collins, 1984, 1987) (ibid., 4). This emotional discourse constructs subject positions that invite emotional identification of others to be in alignment or dis-alignment (Harju, 2015, 2016, 2017). However, in Banten, the moral-emotional discourse of corruption only mobilizes and aligns with other subjects in digital or online contexts (see also Kuntsman, 2012). In digital or on-line contexts, according to Harju (2017:75), “alignments are regularly formed around emotional resonance.” In the online context of Banten, alignments are formed around the emotional resonance of anger as an expression of powerlessness. And, when it came to off-line mobilization, this emotional resonance did not align with other subjects, resulting in weak and powerless political mobilizations. This discursively constructed subject position reflects the characteristic of digital affective citizenship in Banten, which is powerless angry citizens.

I found that the characteristics of digital affective citizenship in Banten are, more and less, similar to the affective online political participation of young people in urban China (Fu, 2020, 2021). This characteristic is a combination of

two types of Chinese youth online participation dispositions: 'angry youth' and 'powerless cynics" (Fu, 2020:6). The first disposition is manifested in the use of aggressive or even excessive language to convey strong ideas regarding political and social topics (ibid.). Their desire for social involvement coincided with easy access to a media platform for self-expression, providing an ideal outlet for expressing their rage (ibid., 7). The second disposition is identified in the youth's on-line critical comments to the state in an indirect and cynical way (ibid., 8). Based on their evaluation of his relationship with the state, the Chinese youth's critical and cynical remark indicated their sense of powerlessness in changing political institutions (ibid.). At a practical level, these two characteristics, which I combined as 'powerless angry citizens' in Banten, may contribute to the public's increased awareness of certain social issues, particularly corruption, by keeping them on the public agenda

In this sense, through the concept of "digital affective citizenship", I make a contribution to the discussion on digital citizenship and the public sphere. I am inclined to extend the notion of digital citizenship (Mossberger, et.al. 2007) beyond the ability to participate in an online environment effectively with a rational, ethical, impartial, and normative behaviours (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2006, Mossberger, et.al. 2007, McCosker, 2014), and broaden it to include 'deviant' or 'aberrant' participation (MacCosker: 2013: 204) involving the use of passionate, aggressive, and vitriolic expression and exchange of sentiments -such as anger, hate, disgust, and a sense of injustice. It means that digital affective citizenship also facilitates citizens' emotional engagement in an "affective public" defined as: "networked public formations that are mobilized and connected or disconnected through expressions of sentiment" (Papacharissi, 2015:125). In this sense, this dissertation contributes to recognizing an online alternative public sphere to the idealized Habermasian public sphere where "reason and rationally driven discourse are accentuated as canonical elements of political conversation" (Papacharissi, 2015: 26) as it can be observed in the legal discourse of corruption in national CSO's social media (chapter 3). In this online affective public sphere, passions, emotions, and hostilities are not eradicated but instead, they become an important and shaping element in it (Mouffe 2000, McCosker, 2013, Tong 2015, McCosker and Johns 2016). In the context of Banten where subnational authoritarianism (Berenschot, et.al, 2021) has existed in the long-term political dynasty's domination, repression and control of over economic activities, this affective public sphere is important socio-politically. In this sense, the formation of affective public in Banten is comparable to the formation of an

agonistic public sphere in authoritarian China (Tong 2015:9) where "expressing emotions itself is a practice of citizenship and a nurturing of the consciousness of resistance". However, besides recognizing this important affective public sphere in Banten, this dissertation also make contribution in identifying the limitation of venting emotion in that affective public sphere in creating strong and effective off-line political mobilizations.

In relation to that, in Chapter 5, I have critically assessed the role of emotions or affect in the transformation of online activism to offline political mobilizations. I argue that, in line with Buechler (2000) and Gerbaudo (2012), emotions such as grievance, outrage, or anger alone have not always been able to create spontaneous and unorganized mobilizations. In other words, emotions cannot be transformed into strong and effective political mobilizations without solid organizations and leaderships, as is exemplified by the case of Fesbuk Banten's News's anti-corruption demonstration and the "Don't Vote For a Corrupt Dynasty" off-line mobilization in Banten. In comparison to Malang Corruption Watch's anti-corruption demonstration, it can be found that solid organizations and leaderships are able to develop strategic and clear programs grounded in symbols, frames and artifacts as well as gain resources that could be used in order to garner support (McAdam, et.al: 1996, Gerbaudo, 2012, Jasper 2018). In this regard, effective organizations, such as Malang Corruption Watch, allows the framing of corruption in a more constructive 'legal-material discourse' that provide participants a clear story about corruption cases, clear suggestions about how to act, and what to demand in curtailing corruption. Apart from these discursive problems and effective organizations, there is external factor influencing off-line political mobilization success. The external factor is political opportunity structure, or socio-political and institutional contexts that enable their mobilization (McAdam, et.al: 1996). In Banten, anti-corruption off-line mobilization was hampered by threats and was tamed by bribery from the political dynasty. Whereas in Malang, political clientelism did not work in taming the off-line protests since t the activists were not under threat and less dependent on governmental resources.

This finding leads me to draw a comparison with Anna Hazare's anti-corruption movement in India, which I have previously mentioned in Chapter 1. I found relatively similar complex relations between how corruption is defined and discursively categorized with the off-line political mobilizations and their limitation. The Anna Hazare movement was notably successful in transforming social media campaigns into off-line demonstrations that were attended by

thousands of people. However, they were unable to sustain the demonstrations and reach beyond the urban middle class citizens. The floundering of this movement is attribute to the discourse on corruption which they construct solely as issues of legality, financial fraud, and bribery, rather than as issues of class and social inequality, where power is only ‘concentrated in the hands of a smaller minority’ (Roy, 2011) (see chapter 1). Similarly, In Banten, the activists have difficulties in mobilizing people outside the circles of the three Facebook page and groups (Fesbuk Banten News, Wong Banten, Forum Warga Banten) and student activists that mostly are urban middle class citizens (see chapter 1 and chapter 5), since they frame corruption as moral-emotional discourse that not related to the rural and urban lower class ordinary citizens. Whereas in Malang, the anti-corruption off-line mobilization were more successful, since the activists were able to stimulate citizens’ mobilizations and participation by relating issues of corruption in other issues, such as land grabbing, environmental issue, and access to educations, that are relevant to the life of the ordinary citizens.

As somebody who also has been involved in an NGO working with participatory visual and digital methods to campaign for youths’ engagement in the socio-political affairs in their community, I feel it is similarly challenging to stimulate youth participation and mobilizations to make changes in their community.

I have been working as a participatory video facilitator for over 20 years. The participatory videos are designed with the following objectives: Firstly, it is meant to serve as a tool for community group development. Secondly, to function as a tactical tool for social change and the realization of social justice. And thirdly, to serve as an empowering tool for building community strength and promoting social change (Milne, Mitchell, Lange; 2023; Alien, Harper; 2013). In other words, I use participatory video to “amplify and reflect processes of social mobilization and people’s identities as citizens within that” (Wheeler, 2011).

In the beginning, I believed that making audiovisual media addressing important issues in youth’s communities using emotional expression would attract youth participation and strong mobilization. However, when I look back at what has happened to my participatory video programs and reflect on the findings from this dissertation, I realize that using media wrapped in emotional expressions does not always produce strong engagements and mobilizations. Then, when I looked back at my programs that succeeded in mobilizing young people in their communities, and through this research, I learned that the

presence of leaders and organizations that can choose and frame relevant issues are crucial factors that make a social mobilization successful.

To conclude, this dissertation is a critical study on how on-line anti-corruption activism reflect characteristics of citizenship and be transformed into off-line political mobilization. Moral emotional discourse of corruption constructed through on-line anti-corruption activism and enacted as digital acts of flaming create a particular kind of citizenship - digital affective citizenship - characterized as “powerless angry citizens”. This moral emotional discourse cannot be transformed into significant off-line political mobilization without effective organizations and strong leaderships.

For future research, I recommend studying how the formation of digital citizenship in broader comparative and historical studies. By looking at different variations and trajectories of online activism and digital citizenship, we will understand whether and to what extent the expression of emotions on-line and the creation of particular kind of citizenship can or cannot lead to a healthy democracy. Today’s Indonesian social media landscape is characterized by ‘the authoritarian turn’ (Power, 2018). The government is increasingly repressing and dis-empowering political oppositions and activists by creating disinformation and pro-government propaganda on the Internet, as well as on-line and technical attacks targeting activists, journalists and civil society. Future research, therefore, must also identify the downsides of online activism and digital citizenship relating to online populism, hate speech, polarization and the emerging of cyber-troopers. To the end, this dissertation is a contribution in pre-signalling those anti-democratic trends in Indonesia’s social media landscape.