

From Popular to Partisan Public Sphere: The Political Change of the Coffee Shops in Kepulauan Riau

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Abstract

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the political transformation of the coffee shops in Kepulauan Riau before the gubernatorial election of Kepulauan Riau 2015-2020. It is driven by the empirical facts that many coffee shops have transformed to be a supporter of one of the candidates of the governor. By using grounded theory and thematic analysis, this study answers the critical questions of why the coffee shops change and what the factors affecting the transformation. A series of the interview was conducted on a dozen of informants, consisted of political parties, campaign and successful teams of the candidates, Local General Elections Commission (KPUD) and Local Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) of Kepulauan Riau, the owners and the visitors of the coffee shop. Evidence of this study points out that the transformation of the coffee shops is the consequence of both political systems and political structure in Indonesia. The empirical findings of this study are not only worthwhile to the study of the public sphere in the context of Indonesian local political setting but also to the practitioners in designing the honest and fair local leaders election.

Keywords

local leaders election; coffee shops; clientelism; Malay's political culture

INTRODUCTION

The coffee shops are an essential part of the Malay society because discussion in the coffee shops has become a culture implemented for a very long time. In the beginning, the coffee shops are only used to meet and discuss among the people. Yet, before the general election, coffee shops substitute to the political arena for the candidates in organizing their mass supporters (Samnuzulsari & Yudiatmaja, 2018). This study ar-

gues that coffee shops are not practically a value-free public sphere. Thus, it is critical to investigate, why the coffee shops change and what the factors affecting the change?

This study is interesting to be attention due to four factors. First, historically post New Order, the Indonesian political

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landscape has transformed from representative democracy to direct democracy and from centralization to decentralization. Democracy influences the changing process of political power centralized in Jakarta. Through the four amendments of the Indonesian constitution, the direct election for president and local head governments was introduced in 2004 (Rasyid, 2003). The transformation of power generates centripetalism of power from central to local elites (Choi, 2011; Hadiz, 2007, 2010).

Second, in the perspective of the political economy, the local elections influence political and economic circumstances in the area. It yields a contestation among the elites in the region. As a result, local strongmen are capturing political and financial resources. They control the process of policy making both in the executive and legislative bodies. They also possess strategic resources in the region, for instance, natural endowment. It is a new trend in decentralized Indonesia where local strongmen or local bossism dominates the power (Agustino & Yusoff, 2010; Masaaki, 2004; Sidel, 2005), political dynasty (Mietzner, 2009; Savirani, 2016), informal governance (Hidayat, 2007, 2009). They have a political and cultural basis so they can capture and distribute the resources in their circle. The phenomenon is a political booms as theorized by White (2009).

Third, 269 regions were carrying out direct local leaders election (*pemilihan kepala daerah, pilkada*) in 2015, including 9 provinces, 229 regencies, and 36 cities in Indonesia. In the Province of Kepulauan Riau, there were 7 pilkada conducted at the same time: pilkada to select the governor, mayor of Batam mayor, regent of Bintan, regent of Lingga, regent of Karimun, regent of Kepulauan Anambas, and regent of Natuna. Pilkada followed by 20 candidates and 2.279.566 voters (*daftar pemilih tetap, DPT*) was successfully performed.

Fourth, empirically, the using of coffee shops in pilkada is an interesting topic to

discuss because the coffee shops are used as a political campaign by the candidates in Kepulauan Riau. It is used to introduce and socialize its vision and mission. It has become an electoral magnitude to gain the vote. As a result, many coffee shops were breaking the KPUD's regulation because many coffee shops deliver the campaign before the time.

Many scholars have recently employed numerous studies about coffee shops in various perspectives (i.e., sociology, marketing and management, psychology, communication, and politics). For instance, in the context of sociology, Maguire & Hu (2013) explored the perceptions and experiences of Chinese consumers in engaging with Starbucks. They suggested that the engagement is as a result of individual and collective identity formation of Chinese consumers. In line with the study, Sarmini, Ridwan, Basriani, & Nadiroh (2017) shed light on the functions of the coffee shop for Acehese's teenager. As conclusion, they noted that in the perspective of young people in Aceh, the coffee shop is not only the place to drink the coffee but also the place to actualize themselves.

By using a marketing viewpoint, Nadiri & Gunay (2013) explored the impact of experiential marketing on young customers' experiential value and respectively on their satisfaction, word of mouth, and revisit intentions in Gloria Jean's Coffee Shops in North Cyprus. They found that the strategic experiential modules and service quality perceptions influence customer experiences positively. They also revealed that customers' satisfaction could drive post-purchase behavior. Then, in the management context, Nagarajan et al. (2017) drew the appropriate coffee shop by using SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat) analysis. They argued that the competitive coffee shop should arrange the design plan, menu, staffing and departmentation, and marketing.

In the literature of psychology, Tumanan & Lansangan (2012) examined the context of physical, social, cultural and environ-

Table 1. Pilkada of 2015 in Kepulauan Riau

Regions	The Candidates	Perolehan Suara (%)	Amount of Voters
The Province of Kepulauan Riau	M.Sani-Nurdin Basirun	347.462 (53,2%)	1.213.797
	Soeryo Respationo-Ansar		
	Ahmad	305.117 (46,7%)	
The City of Batam	M. Rudi-Amsakar Achmad	185.845 (60,4%)	638.797
	Ria Saptarika-Sulistiyana		
		121.836 (39,6%)	
Bintan Regency	Apri Sujadi-Dalmasri	40.386 (57,1%)	99.658
	Khazalik-Indra Setiawan	30.299 (42,8%)	
Lingga Regency	M. Ikhsan Fansuri-Isnin	3.484 (6,7%)	69.552
	Harlianto-Al Ghazali	17.701 (34,4%)	
	Usman Taufiq-Siti Aisyah	(8,9%)	
	Alias Wello-M. Nizar	25.544 (49,7%)	
Karimun Regency	Aunur Rafiq-Anwar Hasyim	70.425 (78,4%)	175.098
	Agusriono-Ahmad Darwis	5.062 (5,64%)	
	Raja Usman Aziz-Zulkhainen	14.341 (15,9%)	
Kepulauan Anambas Regency	Abdul Haris-Wan Zuhendra	15.269 (73,0%)	30.613
	Azhar dan Andik Mulya-warman	5.622 (26,9%)	
Natuna Regency	Rodhial Huda-Rusdi	2.054 (4,8%)	52.051
	Ilyas Sabli-Wan Arismunandar	12.529 (29,4%)	
	Imalko-Mustamin Bakri	8.578 (20,1%)	
	A. Hamid Rizal-Ngesti Yuni S.	18.080 (42,4%)	
	Dedi Yanto-M. Yunus	1.320 (3,1%)	

Source: Data processed from <https://pilkada2015.kpu.go.id>

mental dimensions of place attachment of Philippines' customer of coffee shops. This study concluded that the Filipinos view coffee not only as a product but also as an experience. Employing communication research, absolutely different with Sarmini et al. (2017) findings, Syam, Muslem, & Usman's (2017) survey pointed out that majority of the young people in Banda Aceh only used the coffee shops as the arena for worthless activities, mainly talking with their friend and gaming by using internet.

In the perspective of politics, Erman

(2014) looked into the coffee shops in Belitung island and its relation with political resistance. Political resistance in the study is understood as the social activities of the society to articulate their protest and demonstrate their aspiration in an informal media. In Belitung, as Erman argument, the coffee shops have become an arena to express the dissatisfaction of the public. The process of solidarity making involves many actors, such as non-government organizations (NGOs), cultural communities, and social organizations. The consciousness to

express their interest occurs from the process of dialogue and communication among them. The method generates a decision to refuse several conditions disserving them.

Nevertheless, most studies give only limited consideration to the political economy of the coffee shops. Just a little research has examined the issue. Hence, to redress this gap, our research seeks the relationship of political aspects in the transformation of coffee shops before the local leaders election. The idea of political perspective constructed in the study is the coffee shops, not the static entity, but as founded by Erman (2014), they are complex body influenced by political effects.

From the literature review explain above, there is still a gap in the recent literature on the issue in the political and economic standpoint. Obviously, there are essential concepts to corroborate the political and economic rationales of the transformation of the coffee shops. Notably, the present research contributes to the body of knowledge in several ways. First, our analysis extends the study of coffee shops in the case of Malay's society of Kepulauan Riau by examining the evidence of the gubernatorial election of Kepulauan Riau 2015-2020 because of the little pay attention of the scholars to address the issue. Second, by using political and economic points of view, we aim to broaden the findings of prior research, especially Erman's (2014) study using only limited on political point of view in examining Belitung's coffee shops. Finally, we conduct grounded research to understand the political change of the coffee shops rarely applied by previous scholars.

This article is generally classified in three sections. Firstly, we discuss the background of the study. It presents the rationale of the focus of this study. Secondly, it contains the methods of the study. The piece draws the approach of the study, method of gathering the data, qualitative analyzing method and interpretation of the data. The third section is a description of the results and discussion of the study classified into

three themes, namely the history of the coffee shops, the reasons and determinants of change. Finally, our conclusion depicts the essential results of the study.

METHODS

This study departed from empirical research based on direct observation. It was employed by using grounded theory research. The locus of the study is the gubernatorial election of Kepulauan Riau 2015-2020 because it is a vast pilkada with the number of voters. In-depth interview was conducted with the owners and visitors of the coffee shops of the candidates of the governor of Kepulauan Riau located in Tanjungpinang. The discussion was also employed to the candidates of the governor of Kepulauan Riau, political parties, campaigning and successful teams of the candidates, Local General Elections Commission (KPUD) of Kepulauan Riau, and Local Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) of Kepulauan Riau. The interview guidelines were arranged to find out the answer to the research questions. It has discussed by the researchers before conducting the fieldwork. The data were analyzed by using QSR Nvivo 12 plus software to reach a sufficient finding. We utilized basic qualitative data analysis techniques, follows open coding, clustering, categorizing, and thematic analysis. The findings of the study are qualitatively presented in the light of the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The History and Development of the Coffee Shops in Kepulauan Riau

Kepulauan Riau is commonly known as the "Malay land" (*tanah Melayu*) because it is believed as the origins of Malays (Long, 2009; Milner, 2008; Wee, 1985). In the past centuries, Kepulauan Riau is also famous as the center of the Kingdom of Riau-Lingga located in Daik, Lingga (Dahlan, 2014; Wee & Chou, 1997). All of the Malays are Islam,

and they still conduct Islamic faith strictly so the culture of Malays is very influenced by Islamic beliefs. The facts make Kepulauan Riau to be the center of Malay civilization.

The development of the coffee shops in Kepulauan Riau is possible because of the tradition of the Malays who prefer to go to the coffee shops. They usually meet in the coffee shops to discuss various topics, such as politics, economics, and daily life. The coffee shops have become an essential arena for society to interact with each other and develop social relations (Eng, 2010). As asserted by Bourdieu (1995), the coffee shops is the social capital of Kepulauan Riau society. The tradition is still practiced by the society until now because it is a part of the daily life of Kepulauan Riau society.

The coffee shops evolve in line with the development of social and economic life of the society in Kepulauan Riau. Along with the development of information and communication technologies, many coffee shops around the world provide wi-fi to fill the desire of the customer to be connected by the internet (Hampton & Gupta, 2008; Sanusi & Palen, 2008), including the coffee shops in Kepulauan Riau. The development of the internet enables many coffee shops in Kepulauan Riau to apply wi-fi to attract their customers.

Currently, in Kepulauan Riau the concept of the coffee shop is not as a place delivering a cup of coffee only, but also all of the café. Moreover, the café offers not only all of the kinds of food but also all of the types of drinking. Thus, besides coffee, the café also provides a variety of foods. There are a number of the coffee shops throughout Kepulauan Riau always serving the customer every day. However, there is only a limited number of prominent coffee shops, for example, *Kedai Kopi Hawaii*, *Kedai Kopi Balang*, and *Kedai Kopi Aman*. The coffee shops are distinguished due to both their historical existence and quality factor. These coffee shops are widely known because they have a long history in serving their customers. They also

provide coffee with high taste so they can exist in a competitive business environment.

The Reasons and Determinants of Change

In the beginning, the coffee shops in Kepulauan Riau is a non-partisan public sphere. The coffee shops are an exciting place to meet and socialize with others. Like many favorite places, coffee shops play a crucial role as hospitality and pleasure for many people. The visitors of the coffee shop come from various people, either old or young generations, either poor or wealthy individuals, either non-educated or well-educated people, and either ordinary citizens or public officials. This fact shows the coffee shops as the familiar arena using by Kepulauan Riau society to share their experience equally (Habermas, 1991). The coffee shops are also used as a transactional place in terms of political, economic and social activities. Many deals have been achieved in this arena.

The nature of the coffee shops as a popular public sphere rapidly changes before the gubernatorial election of Kepulauan Riau 2015-2020. From the results of data analysis, we find that two crucial factors are affecting the transformation of the coffee shops becomes political coffee shops, which are political system and political structure. In terms of political aspect, several dimensions are contributing to the variable, which is the election system and party system. These factors contribute to influence the emerging political culture, clientelism, and transactional politics (see Figure 1).

The political system is overall of the political subsystems interacting each other and influencing the performance of the system (Almond, 1965; Easton, 1957). In the Indonesian case, pragmatism politics has been destroying the election system and party system both at the national level and local level. Several contemporary studies confirm the circumstances, for instance, Hidayat (2009) stated as informal governance, Winters (2013) called out as the oligarchy, Aspi-

nall (2013) mentioned as patronage politics, and Aspinall & Berenschot (2019) noted as clientelism. The conditions have become a significant factor in creating the political actors to be opportunistic persons in political competition in Indonesia. They only pursue winning in general election without pay attention to how they can win and how the process. For them, winning is more important than the means they use to win.

Political structure involves the structure of institutions regulating the process of general elections, for instance, law, regulation, policy, and procedure. The concept of political structure here is developed from the idea of institutionalism. Institutionalism is a specified rule of conduct of the political process regulating the political systems (Peters, 1999). Therefore, the institutional structure here is not about the organization or such a body, but it is the working mechanism of the institutions. The critical problem does not the formal regulation of the involvement of the coffee shops in local leader elections so the Bawaslu of Kepulauan Riau cannot take action to the candidates and their coffee shops. There has been a gap utilizing by the candidates to maximize their support. One of the commissioners of KPUD of Kepulauan Riau consciously acknowledges the problem.

“We had not a regulation yet related to the use of the coffee shops as a campaign media. For this moment, we had only the na-

tional regulation of local leaders election which had not to regulate the coffee shops yet (interview, 04/11/2018).”

The incomplete political system and political structure yield the practice of clientelism. Clientelism is closely related to the relationship of patron-client politics. Clientelism concerns the exchange of such goods, social services, and resources from the patron to the clients so the clients would like to vote the patron in general election (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007; Piattoni, 2001; Stokes, 2007). Because of clientelism the number of the owner of the coffee shops interested to change their coffee shops as a supporter of one of the governor candidates. Many of the informants of this study admit that the practice of clientelism occurs in terms of donation of money, goods, and facilities both in the Sani-Nurdin’s coffee shop and Soeryo-Ansar’s coffee shop. Practically, not only the owners but also the visitors had received several benefits from the candidates. For the visitors, the benefits are delivered by the owners of the coffee shop. The goods usually given are clothes, basic food, meals, money, and cigarettes.

The change of the coffee shops also occurs as a logical consequence of transactional politics conducted by the political actors, including the candidates, campaign and success teams. The coffee shops have been used as a transactional place. The candidates offer several benefits and pro-

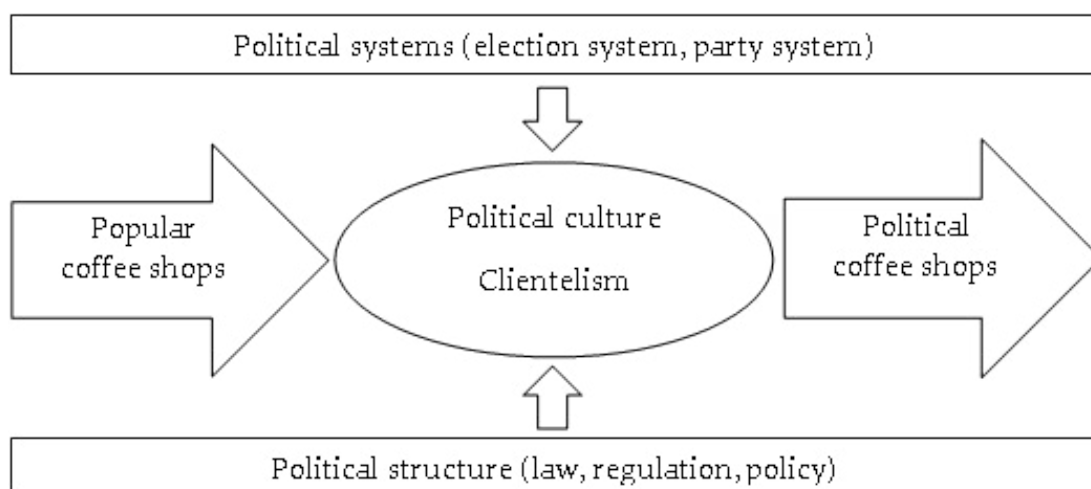


Figure 1. Logical Framework of the Transformation of the Coffee Shops

mise to the owners of the coffee shops if they are elected as governor of Kepulauan Riau. Transactional politics is not similar to clientelism. In transactional politics, the exchange process involves trust and mostly non-physical goods. Meanwhile, clientelism is manifested in the exchange of physical entities, such as goods, money, and meals to obtain a vote directly. Regarding the issue of transactional politics, one of the owners of the coffee shops expressed that:

“I recognized Nurdin (*Nurdin Basirun, read*) as a sailor colleague. My coffee shop was opened before the local leaders election. It was specially opened only for the winning of Nurdin. If Nurdin wins the elections, he promised to strive the interest of Kepri’s sailor (interview, 04/20/2018).”

The political culture of the Malays still respects the older and seniority. As asserted by Maier (1997), it exists with the concept, ‘we are playing relative’. It contains a philosophy of brotherhood for the Malays. Malays are still consistent with keeping their philosophical life, including in the political world. Our findings point out that the existence of the coffee shop of Muhammad Sani-Nurdin Basirun is possible as the impact of brotherhood politics. A number of the owners of the coffee shop will to change their coffee shops as the supporter of Muhammad Sani and Nurdin Basirun because many of them regard Muhammad Sani as the senior figure in Kepulauan Riau. In Soeryo Respationo-Ansar Ahmad side, for the owner of the coffee shop, it is more about ethnic reason as Javanese because Soeryo Respationo is a Javanese. Hence, in the case of Soeryo’s coffee shop, the political culture is dominated by the factor of ethnic similarity.

The results of this study are in line with the findings of Erman (2014) revealing that the coffee shops are used as political goals. In her research in Pulau Belitung, Erman also explained that the coffee shops were an outstanding place to articulate the interests and develop the movement by the actors marginalized from the policy formu-

lation. In this study, we also find that the coffee shops have changed as a political tool to collect the votes. The difference is if Erman’s works show the coffee shops as a useful activities to develop citizenship. At the same time, our findings indicate the negative function of the coffee shops by the owners. The coffee shops have utilized as a political arena to conduct the practice of clientelism and transactional politics.

Our findings are also similar to Samnuzsari & Yudiatmaja’s (2018) evidence. They showed that the coffee shops had transformed to be partisan coffee shops before the Bintan regent election and gubernatorial election of Kepulauan Riau 2015-2020. Unfortunately, because of their research only focussed on the use of *Kartu Bintan Sejahtera* (Bintan welfare cards) as a clientelism and vote buying practices conducted by the candidates of Bintan regent and candidates of Kepulauan Riau governor, they study had not yet shed light on the logic of the issue of the transformation of the coffee shops sincerely. On the other hand, we concern to explore the problem as we explain in the findings of our study.

We consider several implications of this study. In terms of theoretical debates, this study adds the theory of the public sphere developed by Habermas (1991). The findings of this study contribute to the research of the public sphere by proposing several factors affecting the transformational process of the coffee shops. In practice, this study has implied to the process of general election in Indonesia, in particular, local leaders election. One of our findings shows that the KPUD of Kepulauan Riau has not regulated the issue of the use of coffee shops as campaign media. As a consequence, many candidates and their supporters have utilized the coffee shops as a necessary vote-getter in competing at the political contestation. Many candidates have broken down the regulation by conducting the campaign before the time. Thus, the KPUD of Kepulauan Riau should arrange the issue to address the unfair behavior of the candidates.

This study has several limitations declared here. First, this study only focusses on the determinant factors influencing the transformation of the coffee shops without any effort to explore the dynamics of the conversion. As the explanation above, the change involve various actors, interest, and system and structural complexity. Thus, future research can investigate the dynamics of the transformation of the coffee shops. Second, this study only captures Tanjungpinang as the subject of the investigation. Our choice to analyze the coffee shops in Tanjungpinang not represent the circumstances in Kepulauan Riau on the whole because of it only one of the cities in Kepulauan Riau (Long & Godfrey, 2004). The next research should consider to explore the case study in other regions in Kepulauan Riau, for instance, Karimun, Bintan, Lingga, Natuna, etc. to catch the diversity of the society. Finally, the methods of this study still use a single way, which is grounded research. Grounded analysis can understand the evidence deeply. On the other hand, the methods can not portray the dynamics and complexity of the change of the coffee shops (Parry, 2012). Hence, in the future, the strategy can be enhanced by applying multi-methods.

CONCLUSION

In this study, we would like to illuminate why the coffee shops transform to be the political entity specifically before the local leader election. Drawing from the case of the gubernatorial election of Kepulauan Riau 2015-2020, we exhibit that political culture, clientelism, and transactional politics are significant factors as a consequence of the structural factors influencing the transformation of the coffee shops. The fundamental elements are political system and political structure. These factors are the national problem faced by contemporary Indonesian politics undermining the coffee shops.

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