

One Market Under God:
Sebuah Studi Lintas Kultural Indonesia-Amerika
tentang Sistem Ekonomi di Negara Berkembang

Wishnoebroto

Fakultas Budaya dan Bahasa Asing

Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang

Abstrak

Pasar bebas bukanlah barang baru dalam perekonomian dunia di abad dua puluh. Tetapi masih saja, banyak negara berkembang di dunia, seperti Indonesia, salah menterjemahkan ekonomi pasar berdasarkan atas apa yang diinginkan oleh pasar dunia. Dalam One market Under God, Thomas Frank, menterjemahkan apakah pasar itu dan bagaimana pasar terbentuk. Frank mencontohkan bahwa dalam masyarakat Amerika telah terjadi perpindahan dalam hal bagaimana pasar terbentuk dan begitu pula perubahan pasar yang sangat mudah berubah mengikuti perkembangan jaman dan teknologi.

Penulis, dalam hal ini, mengamati banyaknya keterlambatan para pelaku pasar di tanah air untuk mengantisipasi adanya perubahan tersebut. Kakunya birokrasi, KKN dan ekonomi biaya tinggi membuat lambatnya para pelaku pasar untuk menerapkan strategi yang sesuai dengan yang diharapkan. Beberapa contoh kasus, akan ditampilkan sebagai gambaran akan tidak efisiennya sistem ekonomi Indonesia yang diakibatkan oleh kakunya sistem birokrasi.

Kata Kunci: Pasar Bebas, birokrasi, sistem ekonomi

A. New Economy

Thomas Frank in *One Market Under God* is questioning about the future of American society in the late twentieth century. He focuses his observation on looking at economy as the major force of change in American community. After the end of Cold war era in the eighties, America looked at ideology, and politics, as one instrument of economy called the free market. American political ideology made America believes that it is their duty to place democracy on top of everything and free the world from tyranny and hierarchy including the market.

Frank uses the term “New Economy” to distinguish the shift of economic attitude among people in America (or businessman) in looking at the world as one big economic

community. He mentioned that the shift started in the early fifties when America finally finds a new belief that democracy should be spread throughout the world. Democracy, then have a new meaning. Starting in the fifties, democracy means that all people, regardless of their class, social status, race, and ethnic groups have equal opportunity; but not equal income. Slogan of democratic society that underlines the role of people as the highest power is perceived that customer has the absolute power to accept or to reject anything that affecting their life. Businessman or producers then translate the ideology of democracy in terms of equality of the consumer in enjoying wealth and freedom to choose what they need in the market.

Before New Economy came out as a new discourse, the producer dictated the market. Big business, with all the executives, decides everything. Hierarchy, tradition, social class, and status, bureaucracy, as well as government, interfered the market to regulate and control the system. New Economy, as Frank says, emerged as the consequence of superior belief in democracy together with tremendous development in informational technology. New Economy came because more and more Americans feel threatened by the involvement of the authority. People believed that freedom in the market will free them. People were born free, and so is the market. Market has to provide equal opportunity to people regardless of hierarchy and class. Information technology supports this belief by providing a means of communication that eliminate the concept of time, space, and supervision such as the internet. People could do anything they want without fear or strict regulations. They can decide their life in a matter of second without leaving their home and being supervised by the authority. By then, information become the most valuable commodity in which people could have power from the information. In contemporary movies such as *Wall Street* and *Wag the Dog*, information becomes a sort of economy as well as political commodity so crucial to gain capital or to shape the opinion of the community.

New Economy, according to Frank, is for everyone. Anybody could come and join because it has no particular system. In short, Frank tells his reader that the New Economy is a new perception in looking at market as a free, in which people could interact democratically, and freely as the way it should be. There is no man-made bureaucracy and rules. One people met others directly based on trust. From this concept, people finally enter the original realm in human relationship, in which people play as

the actor in the market. They are not separated in a kind of rigid rules as mentioned in theory of economy. They can be the producer, broker, or mediator at the same time. In the wireless technology era, this kind of attitude goes side by side with the New Economy. People are totally in control and involved in the economic process. They have absolute control in their fate, and this is what Frank called the era of "Market Populism" in which people were on the side and involved in the market (p.69).

B. Market Populism

Market Populism on the other hand enables people to have absolute power in the market. The belief in market populism is that the market itself is the people. Individuals are the actors of economy. They are totally capable of making their needs known in their marketplace and of looking out for their interest. The awareness of "people power" in market populism era is reflected in people view in looking at media. People are more critical than before. In one example of Nike shoes for the skateboarders, Frank cleverly shows how the Nike's Public Relation and advertisement strategies saw that people are more believed in a product that defines them rather than the products identified them.

In the late twentieth century, the power of commercials or advertisement that used to dictate people is contested with the idea of public awareness. The communication superhighway such as Internet has educated people in a way that nowadays people have more knowledge than before. Conscience about their existence as one of the major actor in economy has contributed awareness in people's mind that advertising and PR are not always right. But Frank always mentioned about the economic value of information. As mentioned above, information is the most powerful and valuable commodity in the New Economy. For the sake of profit, (economy or political) fake information can be transformed into something real and believed by other people. *Wag the Dog and Network* suggests that one day people can not differentiate which one is the truth or not.

From that perception, Frank could see that the main agent of change in public perception is mostly caused by the achievement in wireless technology in general. Major impact in economy that happens in America is mainly caused by information transferred through telecommunication instrument. Nowadays, economy, such as the fluctuation in the stock market, is closely related to other factors outside its territory such as politics. A false statement could make people loose billions of dollars. From this

view, it is clear that information in general could create a tremendous affect in the market.

C. The Future of Market populism and New Economy

The irony of the new economy and market populism era is happened in dot-com era. The belief of economic democracy is backfired by the pace of technology achievement. Frank mentions that in turn, democracy will not be found in the free market. The market will not be able to compete with the fast growing information technology achievement, and later people will lose their freedom in the market, because they have no choice. This irony is not due to public relation or advertising. This is due to the nature of the market that will accommodate the most efficient way in trading. Frank implies in his discussion, that in the future, public will not have power in the market. Like in *Blade Runner* people have no choice in their life and the class society will emerged again.

Conclusion

Market Populism and New Economy are working together in the late twentieth century. As a synergy of economy, information technology, and human skill, America will have its domination in the world. Frank in *One Market under God* wants to show that by the freedom in economy and market as represented by New Economy and Market Populism people will return to its original nature. However in the future, Frank foresees that big company who get people's trust will dominate human life and finally people will not have the freedom anymore.(in the case of Microsoft) I think Frank is right in this picture of the future of democracy in the market. The final outcome in the market populism and new economy will be gloomy. I would rather say that human will be back to the era where the most survived in the world is the one that have the most capital as mention in Darwin's theory: survival of the fittest.