

Exploring the Terrains of Indonesian Cultural Policy: Learning from Singapore's and Malaysia's Experiences¹

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Abstract

This article seeks to examine Indonesian cultural policy in comparison to Singapore and Malaysia. It focuses particularly on documentary films as a field covered by the cultural policy, which is closely associated with the creative industry. Therefore, this article analyzes various official documents regarding cultural policy and the position documentary films within that policy. While Singapore's cultural policy is quite comprehensive and visionary in managing and regulating arts and culture, it tends to neglect documentary films as it celebrates commercial feature (fiction) films. Similarly, Malaysian cultural policy pays scant attention to documentary films despite its nationalistic nature. Learning from those two neighboring countries, Indonesia should not only have a comprehensive cultural policy, but also a clear vision on the development of infrastructures while taking into account the fast changing ecology of documentary films in Indonesia.

Keywords:

cultural policy; creative industry; documentary film; Indonesia; Singapore; Malaysia.

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menelaah kebijakan budaya Indonesia dengan membandingkannya dengan dua negara tetangga, Singapura dan Malaysia. Utamanya, artikel ini berfokus pada film dokumenter sebagai ranah dari kebijakan budaya yang memiliki pertautan erat dengan industri kreatif. Kendati kebijakan budaya Singapura cukup komprehensif dan visioner dalam mengelola seni dan budaya, kebijakan itu cenderung mengabaikan film dokumenter karena lebih mengutamakan film fiksi komersial. Begitu pula, kebijakan budaya Malaysia hanya memberi perhatian yang terbatas terhadap film dokumenter kendati kebijakan itu berwatak nasionalistik. Belajar dari pengalaman kedua negara tetangga tersebut, Indonesia semestinya memiliki kebijakan budaya yang komprehensif, tetapi sekaligus mempunyai visi yang jelas terhadap pembangunan infrastruktur seraya menimbang ekologi film dokumenter yang senantiasa berubah cepat.

Kata kunci:

kebijakan budaya; industri kreatif; film dokumenter; Indonesia; Singapura; Malaysia.

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Introduction

In Indonesia, cultural policy was rarely discussed perhaps due to it being regarded as less significant than economic policy. Or perhaps, culture is only seen as fit for gossip – revolving around artists or those who perceive themselves as “cultural experts.” It is worrisome that cultural issues were merely viewed as parochial issues or commercial projects that are prone to corruption. Culture is considered to not touch on public interests and act as a guideline for various government policies, even when numerous figures suggest that culture presently is an important medium for global contestation. Not surprisingly, political expert use culture as “soft power” (Nye Jr, 2004) in contrast to “hard power” which was based on military strength. The term “cultural diplomacy” was often used as a strategy to assert national interests through cultural avenues amid global interaction. In a nutshell, culture holds a crucial position in the global power relations and has become a new source of economic strength. However, in Indonesia, culture has frequently been associated with “national identity” issue that is fixed and unchangeable. Moreover, culture has been polished as an object of tourists’ gaze.

It should be noted that this article does not offer a detailed overview of cultural policy (including its association with documentary films) with its prescriptions for implementation, rather, it seeks to map a plethora of issues that should receive immediate attention and further discussions by the relevant stakeholders. Aside from mapping several pressing issues, this article aims to underscore the importance of cultural policy as a guideline to deal with the economic changes brought about by the creative industry. As such, the way on how to formulate a practical cultural policy is beyond the scope of this article. In short, the article is simply an effort to identify some potential problems accompanying cultural policy (especially in association with documentary

films) that requires the involvement of different stakeholders.

In this article, two of Indonesia’s neighboring countries, Singapore and Malaysia were selected as the basis for comparison. This is mainly because this article requires a more focused approach to treating cultural policy. Since both countries are located in the same region as Indonesia, they were inevitably shaped by the same big global powers. However, it should be noted that these countries clearly differ from Indonesia – in regards to their respective geographical features, population size, and demographics as well as the cultural characteristics of the people. The obvious differences in economic development and physical infrastructure supporting all three countries – Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore should also be accounted for. Yet, the differences that exist between these countries should not act as deterrence nor prevent many to learn from. The two countries, namely, Malaysia and Singapore, were not selected to affirm that their cultural policies exemplified model policies that should be followed by Indonesia. Rather, what should be learned from these two countries are the costs and benefits of their respective cultural policies. Though essentially, a sensitivity and critical perspective on the differences between Indonesia and Singapore and Malaysia are required, albeit a comparison often reveals similar issues underlying each country.

Methods

In order to get the details of cultural policy in Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia, this article analyzes various official documents related to cultural policy and locates the position of the documentary film within that policy. In addition, the data extracted from official (government) documents will be intersected with empirical conditions based on media reports or any real experience of documentary filmmaker. Therefore, this article moves away

from the normative (official) conception of culture to real practices of culture, particularly in the field of documentary film in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia.

By employing a comparative perspective, this article provides more nuanced and contextualized understanding of cultural policy in those three Southeast Asian countries and offers the possibility for Indonesia to learn from its two neighboring countries (Singapore and Malaysia). Several aspects of cultural policy will be utilized as the basis of comparison such as the nature of cultural policy, the role of government and the position of documentary films within that policy. While comparing those different cultural policies, this article does not posit them in a hierarchical judgment in order to choose which one is considered the best policy. Rather, it critically looks at some remaining problems in those cultural policies pertaining documentary films.

Cultural Policy, Creative Industry and Documentary Films

Cultural policy is commonly and narrowly understood as subsidies, regulations, and management of the arts. However, according to David Hesmondhalgh (2013), cultural policy can be widely defined as all forms of “innovative, creative and non-scientific forms of knowledge activity and institution that have come to be deemed worthy of this elevated title—the visual arts, ‘literature,’ music and dance, theatre and drama and so on.” Likewise, Jim McGuigan (2004: 144) defines cultural policy as “actions designed by the government in the area of culture, but also covers business operations and campaigns by civil society relating to cultural conditions and their consequences.” According to McGuigan, cultural policy has two features: (1) “proper”: distinguished policies that commonly relate to public funding of arts, media regulations and cultural identity; (2) “as display”: policies that not perceivable, though

sometimes also obviously and commonly relate to glamorization of national culture and construction of culture to being an economic tool. In short, the cultural policy includes complex dimensions and involves some groups that were not limited to the government.

Moreover, cultural policy was often linked to the creative industry. As stated by John Hartley (2005: 5), “The idea of creative industries seeks to describe the conceptual and practical convergence of the creative arts (individual talent) with cultural industries (mass scale), in the context of new media technologies within a new knowledge economy, for the use of newly interactive citizens-consumers.” According to Robinson, though, “creativity depends on the interaction between feeling and thinking and across different disciplines and field of ideas” (as cited by De Jong, 2012: 9). Creativity has recently been linked to anything with an economic value or commercial items. Therefore, Florida (2000: 5) calls “creativity as the decisive source of competitive advantage.” In other words, nowadays creativity is not a mysterious or magic thing anymore owned only by a small selected and talented group of people. In the literature, creativity was often linked to the ability to resolve problems, new findings or innovations related to products, concepts or problems. Commonly, we can find discoveries and innovation in science, but now obviously also in commerce. Of course, creativity in business means a “creative concept that attracts the attention of a lot of people.” Thus, the term “creativity” is inseparable from the cultural context where it was used.

It is worth noting that the concept of the creative industry is often confused with creative arts and cultural industry. The term “cultural industry” was popularized in the 1940s by two German sociologists of the Frankfurt school, Theodor Adorno, and Marx Horkheimer, when they launched their critic of “industrialization of culture” – which mass-produces cheap and artificial

products. New advancements in technology have transformed the divide between arts and mass media. According to John Hartley (2005), arts should be viewed as something intrinsic and should not be confronted with the contemporary global economy supported and mediated by technology. In the context of the creative industry, Brad Hanseman (as cited by Hartley, 2005: 167), states five eminent characteristics of creative practice: (1) creative practices involve interactivity; (2) creative practices are intrinsically hybrid; (3) creative practices embrace new sites and forms of cultural production; (4) creative practices are oriented to multi- platforms, cross-promotional means of distribution; (5) creative practices are not approached as if they are commercially irrelevant.

These five characteristics have, in fact, paved the way for documentary films as the model example of the creative industry. While the documentary film was based on actuality and realism, it still deals with the creativity issue. In order to remind the spectators the nature of the construction of reality they behold, of the “creative” element in John Grierson’s famous definition of documentary as “the creative treatment of actuality” undercuts the very claim of truth and authenticity on which the documentary depends (Nicholls, 2001: 24). In essence, the documentary films want to instill a belief that align with rhetorical tradition, in which eloquence serves a social as well as aesthetic purpose. Meanwhile, interactivity in the production of contemporary media has led to the creation and integration of content in various platforms. There is also an increasing demand for documentary filmmakers to extend their interaction beyond their audience, and to various media platforms. From the beginning, hybridism has molded documentary films, not only in its form but also in its production process. Apart from this, there is also an increasing demand for documentary filmmakers to establish new and innovative

patterns of distribution in the midst of the development of new media that offer various possibilities.

Learning from Cultural Singapore and Malaysian Cultural Policy

Having explored the links between cultural policy, the creative industry, creative practice and documentary films conceptually; a look at the cultural policy in the two neighboring sovereign states of Singapore and Malaysia will be taken. The relationship between cultural policy and documentary films will be examined. Generally, Singapore cultural policy was moved by economic impulse and response to globalization. Before the 1980s, arts and culture were solely treated as ideological state tools to promote the concept of multiculturalism or racial harmony (Chong, 2005). The government took up a significant role in providing grants for arts and cultural activities that exhibit interracial harmony, regardless of whether they were well-programmed or well-structured. However, the economic recession that took place in 1985 forced the Singaporean government to reconsider their concept of arts and culture as a tool for state ideology. As a result, the government saw the burgeoning arts and culture scene in Singapore as a potential to push tourism. Consequently, the concept of arts and culture were moved from the political sphere to the economic sphere. Essentially, the main aim of arts and culture has changed – from serving as an ideological tool for the government to a commodity that was readily utilized for commercial purposes. Thus, arts and culture are now attached with economic value.

The blueprint for Singapore cultural policy was expressed in the Arts and Culture Strategic Review (ACSR) initiated by the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, and has been revised several times since 2010. The ACSR launched in January 2012 contains the vision, for the development of the arts and

culture in Singapore extending to 2025, aiming Singapore as “a nation of cultured and gracious people at home with our heritage, proud of our Singaporean identity”. Apart from the ACSR that formulates a comprehensive policy on arts and culture, a series of blueprints titled “Renaissance City Plans” (RCP) have been launched since 2000. These plans stresses not only the importance of arts and culture in playing a significant role in the Singaporean economy, but also the competitiveness and livability as well as innovation and creativity of the Singaporean society (www.acsr.sg). There are at least three phases of RCP: RCP I (2000-2004) focuses on joint effort to promote the vibrancy of arts and cultural activities, professionalization of creative workers and arts organizations, as well as building up a basic audience. RCP II (2005-2007) emphasizes the capability of the creative industry as well as partnership and internationalization of Singaporean arts and culture. Subsequently, RCP III (2007-2012) develops distinctive arts and cultural institutions and content; boosts a dynamic ecosystem for arts and culture; and creates an audience, supporters and partners who are dedicated to culture (Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts, 2008).

If Singapore’s blueprint design or cultural policy were examined further, visual and performing arts are stressed much more in comparison to film. Perhaps, this is partly due to the fact that the Singaporean government had ambitions to attract as many tourists as possible and as such, make Singapore as the most important arts hub in Asia. In Singapore alone, there are several media authorities which are responsible for film regulations. For instance, the Media Development Authority (MDA), which was established in 2003 as the result of a merger of the Singapore Broadcasting Authority, Films and Publications Board and Singapore Film Commission is responsible for managing public funding subsidies for

film production. The MDA is responsible for developing the Singapore media sector to be transformed into a “global media city” based on the blue print called Media 21 (2004-2008). Technically, funding for film production was dispersed through the Singapore Film Commission or SFC (established in 1998) that launched the program New Feature Film Fund (NFF) for new feature filmmakers in 2008. In 2010, the total aid amounted to S\$ 500,000 or 50% of total production costs and an extra of S\$ 30,000 for promotion and marketing by local distributors cooperating with SFC. It is worth noting that documentary films are excluded from the NFF aid (Infocomm Media Development Authority, 2010).

Capital investment for film production (including co-production involving foreign parties), on the other hand, is under the authority of the Economic Development Board (EDB). The EDB also succeeded in persuading National Geographic and Discovery Channel to install their regional offices in Singapore. The Singapore government offers part of the startup capital and also finances several documentary productions directed by Southeast Asian directors. The Singapore Tourism Board (STB), with its motto “Uniquely Singapore”, in turn, is responsible for organizing national and international film festivals, as part of an effort to Singapore as a shooting location as well as a tourist attraction. It should be noted that these institutions are related to the production of feature films (fiction). Interestingly, the Singaporean government prefers to fund commercial feature films to art-house movies – a move that was seen as uncommon among developed countries. Documentaries are often seen as a part of television, and thus, they are funded frequently by TV stations that are under the authority of the MDA. Of course, a facet of Singapore’s cultural policy that should not be forgotten is film censorship. Apart from meticulously controlling the content of films, the government claims that censorship is a “statement on what

the public wants". The practice of censorship is even considered to be the most important feature of the arts and cultural scene in Singapore, where censorship is contradictory in nature – as censorship aims to safeguard Singaporean's morality or concept of morals while at the same time, maintaining Singapore's image of openness (Birch, 1996). Interestingly, several documentary films have been prohibited due to their allegedly political content, such as *Singapore Rebel* (2005) and *Zahari's 17 Years* (2006) both of which were directed by Martyn See. Forms of censorship are not limited to the banning of the circulation of artworks as well as persecution of the artists, but also through cuts in public funding for certain art groups (for example performing arts or theater).

The Singapore government has recently encouraged joint effort to document notable historical and memorial places, especially places that are facing the dangers of disappearing. This joint effort is part of "The Singapore Memory Project" (SMP) that was launched in August 2011. This project aims to collect 5 million private memories by 2015 for publication. One such example is the documentary film *Old Places* (directed by Royston Tan, Eva Tsang, and Vitric Thng), which attempts to record places throughout Singapore that still lingers in the minds of many; under the threat of erasure, often with parts of these places having disappeared such as: coffee shops, old movie theatres, parks, kampongs, etc. In fact, this documentary was nationally broadcasted via state television (on Channel 5). This move seems rather ironic, mostly due to the fact that the Singaporean government plans to use the Bukit Brown cemetery complex, which has a historical importance, for a MRT line construction in the future.

Despite the Singapore government having a "comprehensive" and "visionary" cultural policy, filmmakers frequently complain about transparency issues with the allocation of public funding for films. As the film director Tan Pin Pin once stated, "We find that the

government has provided an extraordinary amount of money to foreign companies through closed agreements. At the moment, we are campaigning to request more transparency by government institutions related to the film industry, after this case appeared in the news" (Tan, 2012: 321). In the first place, cultural policy (especially related to the use of public funds) demands transparency and accountability. Pragmatic policies or policies for film that are based on purely economic principles run the risk of neglecting the importance of raising local potential. On the other hand, Tan Pin Pin's complaint implies that the Singaporean government prefers foreign film production to local film production, without paying much attention on the effect on local film productions, as long as it is profitable from an investment point of view. Even if film productions were to be treated as investments, the possibility of facing losses in profits still exists. Moreover, investment through co-production does not guarantee that the local film industry experience growth nor does it guarantee that the production is able to reach to the target audience from both of the countries involved.

The Singapore government aims to not only create Singapore as an important tourists' destination in Asia but also a world-class location for film shooting, raising eyebrows among local filmmakers. Unlike other countries throughout Southeast Asia, Singapore lacks a diverse topography – there are no mountains, high plateaus, broad rivers, coastlines stretching over a vast expanse of land, etc. Yet, the Singapore government seems to prioritize raising priming Singapore as a world-class shooting location in comparison to maximizing their economic profit. It is well known that in many Hollywood productions, using foreign shooting locations is deemed to be cheaper as the pay for American labor is far higher and exceedingly expensive and thus, it is more profitable for Hollywood productions to use local film crews which demand lower

pay (McGuigan, 2004: 129). Not to mention, governments in other countries often provide incentives in the form of amenities and tax cuts. It is no surprise then that the film *Titanic* (1997) was mostly shot in Mexico, the film *The Matrix* (1999) in Sydney, *The Lord of the Rings* (2001) in New Zealand and so forth. This, of course, is also true for documentary films.

Malaysian cultural policy, on the other hand, generally serves as a guideline to design, construct and preserve Malaysian national identity as a multiracial nation. There are at least three crucial elements in the construction of national culture, i.e.: national culture has to be based on cultures originating from the Malaysian peninsular itself; with elements from other cultures, which may be deemed suitable, accepted as part of the national culture; as well as Islamic culture which forms an important element within the national culture. These three crucial elements have been agreed upon during the National Culture Congress in 1971. In developing a national culture, there are several objectives to be met: (1) the strengthening of national unity through culture; (2) the development and maintenance of national identity – formed through national culture; (3) the enrichment and development in the quality of human life through harmonizing both social and economic development. These objectives were achieved by developing strategies to reform, preserve and develop national culture through research, development and education as well as (the extension of) cultural relations; increasing and strengthening cultural leadership through the training and guidance of relevant individuals; effectively communicating to instill national conscience and nationalism among Malaysian citizens; taking care for social and cultural needs; and improving the standard and quality of the arts (Kementerian Kebudayaan, Belia dan Sukan Malaysia, 1973).

There is no a policy which focuses particularly on documentary films in Malaysia.

Issues related to documentary films are only part of the “Fundamentals of State Film Making” launched in May 1997 (Ministry of Culture, Arts and Malaysian Heritage Malaysia, 2005). Chapter 8 of the Fundamentals of State Film Making, titled “Development of Documentary and Animated Films” touches on a few aspects of documentary films in Malaysia: a brief history of the development of documentary films in Malaysia; a number of issues related to documentary films and their potential that can be made use by the state, and forms of aid that was given by the state. For the Malaysian government, documentary films have a double potential – that is both in promoting the state and as well as possessing intellectual wealth; while at the same time, containing a commercial value. Similar to the Malaysian government aim of pushing the filmmaking sector to international heights, documentary films were also pushed to international heights.

A number of issues related to documentary films according to the Malaysian government can be summarized as follows: (1) lack of quality documentary scripts (based on research); (2) high production costs as documentary films involve expertise as well as remote locations that are often inaccessible; (3) limited sources of funding; (4) generally low interest among TV stations to purchase local documentary films compared to imported ones; (5) sensitivity towards political issues; (6) limited distribution and marketing of documentaries. In short, the problems related to Malaysian documentary films range widely from the lack of quality documentary scripts to the distribution process (Kementerian Kebudayaan, Kesenian dan Warisan Malaysia, 2005). This implies that documentary films still require the support of the Malaysian government, as they are not deemed as profitable as feature films. It is worth noting that the Malaysian government has at the very least, realized the potential of documentary films to play a role in promoting

the state as well as a valuable economic commodity.

In order to resolve the issues mentioned above, the Malaysian government had taken several steps. First, the Malaysian government prompted local documentary filmmakers to boost their production to increase profits and create a thriving job market. Second, the Malaysian government pushed for the formation of a community of financially strong documentary producers. Third, the Malaysian government expanded the market for documentary films to the global level, as the domestic market is often limited to national TV stations. Fourth, the Malaysian government prompted documentary producers to utilize the Internet as a tool for marketing aside from promotional support made by National Film Development Corporation Malaysia (FINAS). Fifth, the Malaysian government opened a training workshop for documentary film makers as well as inviting foreign experts when required (Ministry of Culture, Arts and Malaysian Heritage Malaysia, 2005). In a glance, it seems that the role of the Malaysian government is limited to facilitating the production of documentary films. Yet, in truth, the Film Censorship Board (LPF) of the Malaysian government holds a strong control over the distribution and circulation of documentary films. In fact, the Ministry of Home Affairs banned Amir Muhammad film's *Lelaki Komunis Terakhir* (The Last Communist, 2006) from the cinemas, despite passing the censor, thus, proving the strong control the Malaysian government has on the distribution and circulation of documentary films.

The Malaysian government has been producing documentary films through Malaysian State Films (FNM), which mainly promotes the development program initiated by the government. In truth, this is merely an extension of what has been done by the Malayan Film Unit (MFU) under the English colonial government. The latter documented

several aspects of the Malaysian society as seen in the pioneer Malaysian documentaries: *Malayan Motor Road* (1920), *Memories of Malacca* (1921), and *Malay Nights* (1931). Through the documentary films produced by the MFU, the colonial government was able to promote its policies. As these are government-produced films, the tone of these documentary films is often instructional and laden with propaganda such as in *The People's Voice* (1953), *Letter from Home* (1954), *The Election Song* (1954) and *Malaya Votes* (1954) (Putri, 2012: 173). Unsurprisingly, the representative of the English colonial government, Gerald Templer, praised the work of the MFU which had shown what Malaya for the Malays, which is important in nation-building effort in the future (Muthalib, 2011).

In the beginning, FNM produced many documentary films revolving around nation-building that were broadcasted on state television such as the RTM (Radio Televisyen Malaysia). Meanwhile, since 2006, FINAS has been continually producing documentaries, some of which were in collaboration with National Geographic Channel and Discovery Channel Asia Networks (Sarji, Ibrahim, Shamsubaridah, 2009: 17). This has been mostly a new development, considering the fact that FINAS, formed in 1981, and the Fundamental Principles of National Cinema (DFN), do not have a clear idea in dealing with documentary films. After FINAS had established a Script and Production Unit that especially serves documentary films, private film companies are able to submit proposals to FINAS. 15 documentary films with duration of between 30 to 45 minutes have been produced by FINAS. Most of these films deal with government programs (Smart Tunnel, Islam Hadhari), royal rituals (*Yang Dipertuan Agong Ke 12, Pentabalan Yang Dipertuan Agong ke 13*), traditional art (*Seni Pertukangan Tembaga, Seni Pertukangan Perak, Muzik Melayu, Warisan Seni Yang Kian Pupus*), and ethnic communities (*Masyarakat Etnik Sabah*). Besides collaborating with foreign TV

channels (National Geographic and Discovery), FINAS also collaborated with Media Prima, ASTRO, TV3, and Pesona Picture Shd.Bhd. According to the records in FINAS, the number of documentary film productions almost doubled from 26 films in 2003 to 45 films in 2004.

In 2012, FINAS sponsored documentary film productions again (directed by Azharr Rudin), this time on traditional boat makers on *Pulau Duyung, Trengganu*, whose numbers are dwindling with each passing year. Among all the projects sponsored by FINAS, Azharr Rudin directs documentary films with a different interpretation based on his shooting experience on Pulau Duyung. Prior to this, FINAS sponsored many documentaries, especially those which promoted the “uniqueness” of Malaysia and are subsequently broadcasted by the Discovery Channel. For instance, the documentary film *Fish Listener* (directed by Dain Said Iskandar) touches upon the rare skill fishermen in Trengganu have which lends them the ability to hear the sound of fishes before they embark on a fishing trip. This effort is meant to achieve several objectives such as (1) promoting exotic places in Malaysia that may seem attractive to tourists; (2) attracting foreign film industries to shoot their films in these places; (3) documenting and preserving the increasingly rare cultural items and ritual processes of the local communities.

While documentary films, along with digital, animation and short films only makes up a small category at the annual Malaysian Film Festival (FFM), documentary films on human rights are frequently promoted by activists during the Freedom Film Festival (FFF). This film festival was launched in 2006 where it screened several documentary films at the auditorium of HELP University College. According to Anna Har, one of the founders of Freedom Fest, “documentary films act as a suitable medium to document the daily life of ordinary people that is contrary to the glamorous life in fiction or feature films. Furthermore, it is a genre that has not received

much attention and acknowledgement by the government nor the audience so far” (cited in Putri, 2012: 174). Each year, Freedom Film Fest addresses topic(s) that reflects the contemporary socio-political situation in Malaysia. With the financial support given by several local organizations as well as the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the European Union, Freedom Film Fest selects the top three documentary film proposals each year to receive funding for production of around RM 6,000 (around more than IDR 19 million) per film. The films funded by Freedom Film Fest are then compiled on a DVD, distributed and marketed for fundraising. Freedom Film Fest has successfully become a space for education on human rights through film and has prompted activists (as well as members of the public) to produce documentary films revolving around human rights issues that were often not covered in mainstream media. Films produced by Freedom Film Fest are frequently used for advocacy and community organizing, especially by native communities and other human rights groups.

Although documentary films supported by the Singapore and Malaysian governments still appear to appeal towards both tourists and nostalgia alike, the educational and documentation value those documentary films hold as visual archives should certainly not be neglected. At the very least, this shows how both the Singaporean and Malaysian governments are conscious of preserving cultural heritage for future generations. Initiatives done by non-governmental organizations provide hope for a better climate to develop documentary film productions, even when problems in the continuity and consistency of documentary film productions were frequently met. Aside from this, these non-governmental organizations often have to solve distribution issues for documentary films.

While the Singapore government has “transparency” issues in allocating public funds, the Malaysian government suffers from

being biased (“favoritism” issue). In Malaysia, only films in Malay language are considered to be “Malaysian films” or “national films”. Thus, films with a majority of dialogues in non-Malay languages (Chinese or Tamil) are often not classified as Malaysian films, despite Malaysia being a multiracial country. Of course, this implies how difficult it is for non-Malay films to receive production funding from FINAS. Should the Malaysian government begin to change this policy, Malay-speaking films would still enjoy greater opportunities. Even at FFM, non-Malay speaking films have never entered the main competition, but rather peripherally classified as “foreign” language films.

Meanwhile, in the Indonesian context, during the New Order regime (1968-1998) cultural policy was an instrument to strengthen national culture with a centralistic spirit as can be seen in the national language policy and the establishment of cultural parks in several provinces. Besides that, the government took stock of all regional cultural potentials to be claimed as part of the national cultural heritage (Jones, 2013). Although the 1998 Reformasi carried out the spirit of decentralization and political liberalization, this centralistic and nationalistic predilections never completely disappeared. For instance, the Film Bill No. 33 Year 2009 still prescribes Indonesian film as having a “strategic role in strengthening national cultural resilience and national security through social and cultural welfare”. Moreover, film was also regarded as a tool for “guiding good morality” and “developing human potential” of Indonesian citizens. Clearly, there is no vision about film as part and parcel of the creative industry which embodies economic value. Although the Film Bill stipulates film as an “artistic work”, it does not necessarily against commercialization of film as there are detailed regulations on business permit and film production.

Looking at closely the Indonesian Film Bill, there is no special regulation regarding

documentary films. In the first paragraph of the explanatory section of the article the term “documentary film” only appears as an example of “non-fiction film “along with other film genres such as “animation film,” “feature,” “art film” and “experimental film.” Not surprisingly, the Film Bill does not provide detailed regulations on documentary films. However, this can also be interpreted that the government lacks a commitment to documentary films. Despite a clear vision of the development of documentary films, concrete forms of facilitation by the state for documentary film production, exhibition and distribution are clearly very much needed. In the explanatory section of the Film Bill, the “facilitation” role of the government was defined as “providing support and amenities to film making, among others through the provision of facilities and infrastructure, including film centers.” While the role of the government can be neatly formulated, some critical questions remain: What does “amenities” (business permit, taxes, or other) mean? What exactly are “facilities” and “infrastructure” (technology, post-production facilities, etc.)? Have all facilities and infrastructure been in place or are there still wishful thinking? What does “film centers” (fully equipped and integrated film complex) mean? Have they already been established? These questions clearly suggest the importance of a detailed policy and a palpable vision on documentary film.

Reflections on Indonesian Cultural Policy

The tension, if not a paradox, in which creative industry policy makers have to resolve are two folds: raising and spreading the products of the creative industry (Hesmondhalgh, 2013). Unfortunately, these two things have different objectives as well as value basis. While the first objective is to promote excellence, the second objective is to create wider access. Therefore, the first objective often implies a “noble” value, whereas the second implies

populism. In Indonesia, precisely these two objectives are serious problems. To date, there is a lack of government support or facilitation for talented and promising Indonesian documentary filmmakers. The government tends to pay attention albeit very limited to feature (fiction) films rather than documentary films. Interestingly, the explanatory section of the Film Bill No. 33 The year 2009, Article 69, number F, states that funding (government aid) is provided to filmmaking “which has the potential for gaining international acclaim.” In the annual Indonesian Film Festival (FFI), the documentary film competition section is less prestigious than feature films. Moreover, when I attended the FFI in 2012, the award ceremony for documentary films was not even broadcast live (only as an off-air program) by the TV station that sponsored FFI. Documentary film festivals in Indonesia like FFD, which has been held since 2001, have never prompted the government to allocate enough funding into these festivals to be sustainable. The same goes for outstanding documentary filmmakers who do not receive much appreciation. Not to mention, that we still face regional imbalances of documentary film making across Indonesia.

Cultural policy generally tends to focus on actors of the creative economy (through subsidies) rather than the infrastructure for the audience to access the films. In the context of Indonesia, many government-sponsored film productions, which are based on various script-writing competitions, often neglect the aspect of distribution and exhibition of those films since their main focus was on production aspect. As a result, the broad audiences still do not have access to watch those films. Likewise, documentary filmmakers do not know what happens to their films after raking an award at the film competition. Perhaps documentary film festival organizers might learn from the experience of the Freedom Film Festival (Freedom Fest) in Malaysia that compiled award-winning films into a

DVD; then distributed for fundraising, and to disseminate social issues raised by those documentaries.

The policy makers (government) often play a crucial role in balancing two conflicting tasks: liberating creative economy actors and tightening control of the distribution and marketing process. Indeed, to reconcile creativity (sparked by individual freedom) and the market (marked by the passion of commercialism) is not as easy task. As is well known, the Indonesian government is very much enthusiastic in controlling the creative works rather than enhancing the creative capabilities of documentary filmmakers as creative economy actors. This is understandable since the government is quite anxious to the unconventional “truth” within documentary films, instead of encouraging the plurality of “truths” as can be found in many documentary films. As film scholar Patricia Aufderheide states, “Documentary is an important reality-shaping communication, because of its claim to truth” (2007: 5). Not surprisingly, the Indonesian film policy can be understood as “attempts by the state to police the cultural misdemeanors of its citizen rather than performing the military function of protecting them against alien advances ” (Sen, 1996: 170).

It is noteworthy that state and private television had been the available channel for Indonesian documentary films than cinema as no cinema house exclusively shows documentaries in the midst of declining the cinema across Indonesia. If we take a closer look, some television programs (such as reality TV) have been applying some principles of documentary filmmaking though they tend to follow similar (standard) format. In order to attract a wider audience, television stations even produce documentary films with dramatization consisting of many re-enactments, which are far from being authentic. Furthermore, the success of television documentary program was measured by the TV ratings as a barometer to measure to attract audience and advertisers.

Besides, most TV programmer firmly believes that documentary films do not sell and cannot boost ratings. As a result, documentary films are rarely shown on television as they are less prestigious than soap operas or reality shows which have a insignificant commercial value.

Of course, the government is not the sole actor in the making of cultural policy. In the context of documentary films, there are several relevant actors: (1) educational institutions for documentary filmmakers training; (2) TV stations or cinema for exhibiting and screening documentaries; (3) film archive organization for preserving and restoring documentary films. If we examine these actors in Indonesia, there is still a lot to improve. The number of educational institutions that can generate reliable documentary filmmakers is still insufficient; while existing institutions still have to improve. At the same time, Indonesian TV stations have so far fully obeyed the rating system and are not bold enough for programming innovations (including screening creative and innovative documentary films). And the condition of Indonesian film archives is often rather a matter for concern than pride. Thus, efforts to improve the situation for documentary film making still ask for hard work on almost all lines and a series of institutional improvements.

Conclusion

Cultural policy has a crucial position as a reflection of the vision society has and plays a pivotal role in guiding various groups in the field of culture. Considering the close connection between cultural policy and the creative industry, creativity has a crucial position. Creativity is the uncertain factor of policy makers; when wading the torrents of new economic developments based on knowledge or known as the "creative economy." The fate of documentary films is not entirely clear in cultural policy. The experiences of the two neighboring countries, Singapore and

Malaysia, clearly show that documentary films do not receive the significant attention of the government in comparison with fiction films. Unfortunately, viewing from a cultural policy perspective, both fiction and documentary films in Indonesia do not receive a proper attention from the government. In the context of creative industry, documentary films must deal with the television industries that tend to celebrate homogeneity and formulaic television documentary to please the taste of the masses.

Meanwhile, it is difficult for documentary filmmakers to brush aside the development of technology, including the new media. Nowadays, armed with mobile or smartphones, everyone can immortalize an event in a recording. Consequently, facilitated by digital technology, a process of democratization in documentary filmmaking takes place. At the same time, the demand for interactive documentary films is on the rise. Documentary films are now increasingly hybridized and thus, becoming increasingly interconnected with different media and platforms. This does not only affect the format of documentary films but will also determine what form the exhibition, and distribution documentary film takes up. Thus, the documentary film that touches on real life events has become inseparable to the real world itself. As the world continues to evolve, so do documentary films (Ward, 2006: 102). Thus, a cultural policy with a particular focus on documentary films should continue to adapt to real changes in keeping with the times. In a nutshell, Indonesian cultural policy constantly requires searching a new terrain for cultural policy.

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