



An Imagined Community

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We all probably agree that COVID-19 pandemic has been ruining our plans and even lives in general. Most of our activities are limited and our connections with friends, family and even the loved ones are at risk. Some people have lost their beloved ones because of the pandemic. Some long-distanced couples have to wait until an uncertain time to be able to see each other again. The pandemic is also forcing us to work differently and to upgrade both our hard and soft skills. Moreover, it changes our habits in living. We wash our hands more often than ever. Most of us wear masks whenever we go out. We avoid handshaking with people. We are prohibited to gather with our communities. Therefore, the writer of this article could not help but wonder, what happens to the future of our communities? Will this new way of life affects our social interactions with others in the future? Would it make it better or worse?

It reminds the author about a book that he studied during his Master's Degree, 'Imagined Communities'. It is written by Benedict Anderson. The author describes that the creation of a culture

in a nation is affected by historical experiences of a society, religion, political power and a society itself. If this pandemic lasts long enough, our new generations will eventually get used to the way of we are living now, such as alienating ourselves from people, being more self-centered, or perhaps not needing any real connections with 'real' people. This historical event will be our turning point where we are necessitated to contemplate more critically about how to solve various kinds of problems.

Anderson (1995) stated the reason why he used the term 'imagined' as the title of his book, "Imagined because the members of the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion". It implies that we as the new generations will only be able to imagine us through a community that knows about us. Meaning, our history could only be imagined by the future generations and there is a slight chance we will be forgotten and they might make the same mistake again in the future. As we know, pandemic happens every 100 years. The time itself has the power to erase our existence, our

history, from our future generations. On the other hand, we are lucky that it won't happen anytime soon since we are a great nation.

The author believes that we all see Indonesia as a nation. However, before a nation come into a society and blends with them, there would be an imagined perception about a nation. Community, according to Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, is, "The people living in one particular area or people who are considered as a unit because of their common interests, social group or nationality". It means that the common interests, social group or nationality which bound people as a community. In the future, it is highly possible people change their beliefs about community itself. If the government, schools, and teachers, specifically, could not aid the new generations to recognize the pride of their nationality, they might adopt or create their own definition of community. However, their new understanding about what community is should not always be something negative.

Nowadays, our young generations are mostly more knowledgeable compared to those in the past. They have unlimited access to information and unlimited access to new join various kind of communities based on their interests. They have more options than us in the past. They just need to tap their mobile phones, type some hashtags and become any member of communities that fit them

most. That is one of the reasons why it could be dangerous and good at the same time. It could be dangerous because they might join some radical or extreme community. However, it could also be good thing, because they are connected with people with the same passion and interests as them.

Indonesia and the people who are living in it will always try to build communities, whether it is social, business, religious community, etc. Those communities are bounded into a nation because there must be a reason for them to live together. Indonesia has many communities and the communities have their own cultures, belief and political power. For example, a community in Java would only be able to imagine the lives of their fellow-communities in Sumatra or Kalimantan. There would be a misunderstanding if a community do not have any interest to learn about their other fellow-communities. However, today's medium advancement has provide us a shortcut to learn about our fellow-communities today. The internet spreads the information like never before. However, even if there are such help from internet, a community would always be limited to only imagine their fellow-member communities if they are not physically present and see each other in flesh. Therefore, we as the member of the nation should work together and support our government's efforts to reestablish our beloved country, so we can travel again and ended as the 'imagined'./AR/

References

Andreson, B. (1995). *Imagined Communities*. British Library Catalogue in Publication Data: New York.