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## NEOLIBERALISM AND RECONFIGURATION OF THE DIASPORA IN CONTEMPORARY INDONESIA

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### ABSTRACT

In most studies on globalization and transnationalism, diaspora is positioned in a conflicting and antagonistic relationship with the nation-state regime. Nevertheless, the global ascendancy of neoliberalism as a market-based mode of governing populations has brought certain changes to the relationship between the diaspora and home countries which call for further research. This essay investigates the implications of neoliberalism for diasporic kinship ties by examining emergent discourses in contemporary Indonesia that constitute an elite-led project on diasporas known as the Indonesian Diaspora Network (IDN) Global. Based on a social constructionist analysis of data gathered from activities, media reporting, and promotional materials associated with IDN Global, this essay argues that neoliberal reconfigurations of Indonesian diasporic identities manifest in two ways: unequal representation between manual workers and professionals and change of rhetoric on kinship ties as a strategic asset. Such findings reveal a more complicated and calculative relationship between the Indonesian diaspora and the Indonesian home country that complicate the valorization of diaspora against national regimes.

### KEYWORDS

Diaspora; Indonesian diaspora; neoliberalism; kinship; representation.

### ABSTRAK

Pada sebagian besar kajian globalisasi dan transnasionalisme, diaspora dan negara kerap didudukkan di dalam relasi yang berseberangan. Namun, dominasi neoliberalisme sebagai suatu logika dan tata laksana berbasis pasar membawa dampak pada relasi antara diaspora dan negara yang membutuhkan penelidikan lebih lanjut. Artikel ini melihat implikasi neoliberalisme dalam konteks Indonesia hari ini pada ikatan kekerabatan diaspora dengan menganalisis wacana-wacana yang terkait dengan sebuah proyek elite diaspora yang dikenal dengan Indonesian Diaspora Network (IDN) Global. Berdasarkan pendekatan konstruktivis sosial pada data yang dikumpulkan dari kegiatan, reportase media, dan materi promosi yang terkait dengan IDN Global, artikel ini berargumen bahwa rekonfigurasi neoliberal identitas diaspora Indonesia termanifestasi dalam dua bentuk: representasi tidak imbang antara pekerja manual dan pekerja profesional dan perubahan retorika ikatan kekerabatan sebagai aset strategis. Temuan ini memperlihatkan

hubungan yang rumit dan kalkulatif antara diaspora Indonesia dan negara Indonesia yang mengintervensi valorisasi diaspora atas negara nasional.

#### KATA KUNCI

Diaspora; diaspora Indonesia; neoliberalisme; kekerabatan; representasi.

### 1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, transnational Asian knowledge workers have grown as a group, distinguishable by their prestigious university diplomas, highly trained expertise, and lucrative careers (Yang 2005). The growth of outwardly mobile Indonesian professionals who form part of this transnational class of knowledge workers has, however modestly, captured the attention of the Indonesian government. Some Indonesian authorities consider them a security risk against Indonesia's sovereignty, as expressed by a representative of the People's Representative Council: "Indonesia has yet to become fully independent in choosing its foreign policy. Imagine what will happen when more Indonesians live and work in the countries that continue to dictate our domestic and foreign policies" (Widhana 2016). Others within the government perceive these workers as an untapped resource, as can be seen in the pronouncement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the vital role played by 800 Indonesian professors and PhD degree-holders living overseas in Indonesia's development (Infomed 2017).

In addition to the Indonesian government, the Indonesia Diaspora Network (IDN), which is a non-state collective for overseas Indonesians, appears to take an interest in the growth of transnational Indonesian knowledge workers. The IDN was officially established in 2012 in Los Angeles by an Indonesian career diplomat, Dino Patti Djalal during his time as the Indonesian Ambassador to the United States. It has organized four international congresses in which 56 chapters representing 26 countries have already participated. The IDN promotes itself as an inclusive hub not only for all overseas Indonesian citizens but also former citizens, non-citizens who have ancestral ties to Indonesia, and non-citizens with an inclination for and interest in Indonesia, who are also known as "Indonesianists" (Indonesian Diaspora Network n.d.). Promotional materials from the congresses show signs of a predisposition toward knowledge workers, implying that the IDN's claim to represent the entire diaspora is not borne out in practice.

In this essay, I investigate this official discourse of the Indonesian diaspora using empirical data gathered online. I juxtapose the IDN's claims of inclusivity with the public statements and narratives of members, as well as media reportage on the IDN's congresses and activities. I followed the theoretical work of James Clifford (1994), particularly the suggestion to approach diaspora as a discursive field that is perpetually interpreted and modified across different spatiotemporal contexts and power relations. Clifford's view of diaspora is fruitful for the purpose of this essay, as it allows an interpretation of diaspora that is not limited to certain essential features. Given that studies on Indonesian diasporas have generally focused on diaspora as a cultural phenomenon in opposition to or against political and economic forces (e.g., Meel 2011; Missbach and Myrntinen 2014), I also take into account Aihwa Ong's call for an analysis of diaspora that "link[s] actual institutions of state power, capitalism, and transnational networks to [...] forms of cultural reproduction, inventiveness, and possibilities" (1999, 15). I also draw productively from works in social sciences on neoliberalism (e.g., Ong 2006; Rose 1989; Greenhouse 2010).

Using a social constructionist analysis of the data, I identify a neoliberal logic in the discourse of diaspora constructed by IDN, which plays out in two interrelated ways. First, there is interplay between the strong representation of Indonesian transnational knowledge workers and economic and political elites

and the shadowed representation of Indonesian transnational manual workers. This produces a graduated representation of the diaspora, which, I argue, is influenced by a new form of global ranking of human capital. Second, a marketization of belonging is found within the diaspora through the institutionalization of enterprise culture and the transformation of cultural ties between the diaspora and Indonesia into value chains.

## 2. Neoliberalism as Concept

Studies of diaspora have too often focused on the “subjective experiences of displacement, victimhood, cultural hybridity, and cultural struggles in the modern world” (Ong 1999, 12). In this essay, however, I explicate the relationship between the discursive field of the diaspora and the concept of neoliberalism with a small n that Ong (2006) theorizes as a cultural logic of governing diverse populations using market-driven calculations, in contrast with Neoliberalism, an economic doctrine and political philosophy. I also draw on the works of Nikolas Rose (1989) and Carol Greenhouse (2010) in my analysis of the diaspora discourse constructed by IDN to further analyze manifestations of neoliberalism within the emergent discourses of Indonesia diaspora from the vantage point of political economy.

In mainstream academic and popular discourse, neoliberalism is almost exclusively understood as an economic doctrine that has the intention to deterritorialize national economies and promulgate policies based on principles of the open market. However, in particular streams within the social sciences, neoliberalism is approached in a more critical, comprehensive, and cautious manner. In her theorization of neoliberalism as a market-based technique to categorize and govern different populations, Ong (2006) argues that a new division of class is being created on a global scale, with certain professions and credentials being given more value and worth than others. Like Yang (2005), who notes of the expansion of the class of transnational Asian knowledge workers, Ong observes the connection between this new form of ranking of human capital and the “rise of a class of global professionals armed with ‘world-class’ credentials [...] good for business and scientific research [and] a new form of global ranking based on human capital, mobility, and risk-taking” (2006, 154).

With the intensification of transnational mobility and changes in the division of labor globally, human beings have become incorporated into a global ranking of capital worth that was previously comprised of transnational and multinational companies. Therefore, the notion of “enterprise,” which was previously used to describe the entrepreneurial economic activities of companies, is now used to imagine, view, and govern human beings based on their worth in the global market. This reality raises the question of the defining characteristics of one’s worth within the emergent discourses constituting IDN Global and whether it mainly draws on one’s primordial identities, for instance ethnicity. On this matter, the concept of the “enterprising self” by Nikolas Rose (1989) is particularly helpful, as it provides insight into the worth of individuals as an impact of the ascendancy of neoliberal ideology.

The “enterprising self”, according to Rose (1989, 6), explicates how within the neoliberal age each and every individual is construed to possess “enterprising capacities” which are skills required to “achieve economy, efficiency, excellence and competitiveness.” Rose observes how it has become the preoccupation of many governments today to instill and foster enterprising capacities among their citizen-subjects in a manner that is seemingly oblivious of structural inequalities that exist in every society. On that account, every human being is fully responsible towards his or her own social and economic welfare and that governments should focus on preparing their citizen-subjects towards this position. For the purpose of this research, it is thus pertinent to examine how this idea of the “enterprising self” plays out in the discourses on Indonesian

diaspora today particularly with regard to the characteristics of worth and modes of instilling such worth among the diaspora.

As human beings are both individual and collective selves, it is also important to examine the implications of neoliberalism on diasporic collective identities and relations. In line with Aihwa Ong's concept of neoliberalism with a small "n", Carol Greenhouse (2010) argues that neoliberalism has had a profound impact on the traditional social bonds within a community by overwriting them with mechanistic, individualistic, and calculative values. She explains that neoliberalism has sought to marketize social values and reconfigure "people's relationship to each other, their sense of membership in a public, and the conditions of their self-knowledge" (Greenhouse, 2). On that note, it is interesting to examine to what extent the social diasporic bond within the case of IDN Global has been reconfigured by neoliberalism and how it manifests.

### 3. Unequal Representation of The Indonesian Diaspora



Figure 1. Ceremonial Declaration of the Indonesian Diaspora in 2012.  
(The First Congress of International Diaspora, n.d.).

"We consist of professionals, laborers, hospitality workers, ship crew, engineers, architects, teachers, students, politicians and activists, artists, entrepreneurs, innovators, athletes, religious figures, youths, housewives and many more." These words find their place in the declaration of the Indonesian Diaspora ceremonially professed by the leaders and attendees of the First Congress of Indonesian Diaspora (CID) in 2012, in Los Angeles. The line is also pregnant with messages of unity and solidarity. Similar messages were also resonant in the closing musical concert of the Fourth CID in Jakarta, ostentatiously titled *One Diaspora Love*. Despite these symbolic assertions of unity in diversity and solidarity, I identify unequal representation of the Indonesian diaspora, with a strong representation of Indonesian professionals as well as economic and political elites, which overshadows the representation of manual workers, housewives, and other diverse forms of work.

### 3.1 Strong Representation of Knowledge Workers and Elites

The IDN's invocation and use of diaspora as an inclusive network or community of overseas Indonesian citizens and non-citizens may appear to be a curious affair, as the notion is mostly used academically and popularly to describe exilic communities separated from the homeland who yearn to return home (e.g. Safran 1991). However, Clifford (1994, 307) suggests that, instead of fixating on particular essential features of a diaspora and whether a community checks all its boxes, one can shift one's attention to the "diaspora's borders, on what it defines itself against". He further finds that diasporas have historically been occupied with external "relational positioning [against] the norms of nation-states and (2) indigenous, and especially autochthonous claims by "tribal" people" (Clifford 1994, 307). Building upon Clifford's proposition, I identify an internal relational positioning, within the discourse of the Indonesian diaspora constructed by the IDN, of Indonesian individuals based, on rankings of human capital.



Figure 2. Faces of Successful Indonesian Knowledge Workers and Elites. (Diaspora RI 2017).

In the IDN's promotional materials, Indonesia's exilic communities, such as the post-1965 exiles and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) exiles, are unseen. Instead, the Indonesians who are for the most part represented on the IDN's official website and promotional materials for the congresses are young globally mobile Indonesians, many of whom are self-proclaimed global citizens and periodically travel back and forth between Indonesia and other countries with ease. The composition of speakers invited to fill the fifteen plenary and parallel sessions during the Fourth CID in Jakarta, Indonesia, for example, was dominated by a transnational class of professionals working overseas in lucrative areas, such as the STEM fields and creative industries.

The strong representation of Indonesian knowledge workers and elites produces a discourse of diaspora that centers on a small privileged group of Indonesians. Analysis of the public statements and narratives circulated by members of the IDN in the media, particularly on the inspiration and function of the IDN, provides insight into the logic underpinning the amount of representation given to these groups. In an interview on the inspiration behind the IDN, a document which gives insight into the political agenda behind IDN's function as a network of accomplished overseas Indonesians (Global Indonesian Voices 2012), Dino Patti Djalal says:

As an Ambassador I traveled around the USA and met with Indonesian communities across the country. In every city that I visited, I found that there are people of many remarkable talents, such as scholars and entrepreneurs, within the Indonesian communities. I was surprised by their success stories and the fact that many of them did not know each other. There were many “unconnected dots,” among talents from different cities and across different countries. From this emerged the idea to transform these individual dots into a global network.

Djalal’s statements contradict the inclusive nature of the Indonesian diaspora proclaimed through the IDN’s symbolic assertions of unity and solidarity.

In addition to the class of transnational Indonesian professionals, the Indonesian diaspora is also represented by a group of Indonesians who studied or worked overseas but have returned and taken up important economic and political positions in the country. This is reified in the network’s publication of a book titled *Life Stories: Resep Sukses dan Etos Hidup Diaspora Indonesia di Negeri Orang* (Life Stories: Success Recipes and Life Ethos of the Indonesian Diaspora in Foreign Countries) in 2012. The book contains 28 reflections of Indonesian economic and political elites, such as Sri Mulyani, Gita Wirjawan, Sandiaga Uno, and Todung Mulya Lubis, and it can still be found for sale in local bookstores like Gramedia, indicating the appeal to the public of the idea of successful Indonesian diaspora. This appeal can in fact be linked to the elite-driven spread of an “attitude of optimism—about the future and about individual Indonesian life chances [...] become rich and become cosmopolitan,” which Gellert (2015, 373) argues has been promulgated by elites and dominant classes in Indonesia since the early 2000s.

The existence of a convenient arrangement between a class of outwardly mobile Indonesians and Indonesian economic and political elites is an important finding on its own. Ong argues that often studies looking at the implications and workings of globalization are shaped by the “desire to find definite breaks between the territorially bounded and the deterritorialized [...] the stable and the unstable, [and] [...] sometimes overlook complicated accommodations, alliances, and creative tensions between the nation-state and mobile capital, between diaspora and nationalism” (Ong 1999, 16). Within postcolonial studies, for instance, there is a long-standing tradition represented by Edward Said (1994) and Hamid Dabashi (2011) that emphasizes the potential of the “migrant” to go against the territorializing forces of nation-state regimes through tropes, such as the “intellectual comprador”. On this account, the alliance between those associated with the Indonesian diaspora and Indonesian political and economic elites reveal that the oppositions between transnational and national collectives within current politico-economic formations are not as clear-cut as they are often imagined to be.

### **3.2 Shadowed Representation of Manual Workers**

Beyond Indonesia’s exilic communities, the diaspora discourse constructed by IDN has also produced a representation of manual workers that is overshadowed and barely perceptible. Taking the Fourth CID as a case in point, looking at a piece of the promotional materials from this congress, Erwiana Sulistyarningsih, a former migrant domestic worker in Hong Kong who in 2015 won a long-fought case against an abusive employer, is barely noticeable.



Figure 3. Overshadowed Indonesian Manual Worker. (*Undangan* 2017).

In the promotional material in Figure 3, Erwiana is positioned in the bottom-right corner above the CEO of Crown Group Iwan Sunito. Meanwhile, the center and focal position of the material is filled by the founder of IDN-Global, Dino Patti Djalal, and popular singers, namely Maudy Ayunda and Anggun C. Sasmi. Furthermore, in terms of composition, out of the forty-five faces in the material Erwiana is the only face representing manual workers which is ironic bearing in mind that migrant workers in particular make up the largest professional group in the Indonesian diaspora.

It is important to determine the exceptional quality of Erwiana's case, which granted her inclusion and representation within the emergent discourse of the Indonesian diaspora promulgated by IDN-Global. Her inclusion arguably stems from her decision to leave her profession and enroll in university, majoring in economics (Ariefana 2017). Erwiana's determination to transform herself into a more "preferred" subject in today's context makes her a paragon of self-transformation, which can be used to both inspire millions of Indonesian migrant domestic workers to transform themselves, and also to humiliate them for not following her path. This type of humiliation is not a new governing technique. In fact, humiliation is "a necessary condition of economic 'takeoff' for through humiliation the humiliated can "desire the benefits of 'progress,' its material wonders and comforts" (Robbins 2005, 39). In that sense, one may even argue that Erwiana no longer belongs to the category of manual workers, as she has managed to transform herself by way of education.

The choice to go with Erwiana can also be understood as a political strategy that is problematic. To begin with, the strategy popularizes the assumption that the millions of Indonesian manual workers overseas simply lack the vision and determination to achieve self-transformation. It shifts the root of the problem of the flight of Indonesian migrant workers from structural limitations to individual, personality-based constraints. In addition, the valorization of self-transformed migrant workers may have unintended consequences on the sense of worth of these workers. Overplayed ideas of self-transformation have indeed been recognized as a source of social suffering for disadvantaged groups. For instance, in her work on the impact of modern education on Indonesians living in the highlands of Papua, Munro (2013) argues that there is violence in the



“inflated possibilities” proclaimed to the locals, who are heavily circumscribed by structural conditions; this led to a sense of diminishment among them.

Analysis of the topics brought up for discussion during the Fourth CID also shows limited space for manual workers. The Task Force on Migrant Workers, a body formed within the IDN, held five parallel sessions with Erwiana as the speaker, along with representatives from the Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers (*Serikat Buruh Migran Indonesia*) and the National Commission on Violence Against Women (*Komnas Perempuan*) (Rahmansyah 2017). However, when juxtaposed with the absence of representation of these groups in plenary sessions and the total number of parallel sessions available, the five parallel sessions given for Indonesian manual workers seem insignificant.

There is not enough empirical data to fully probe the experience of manual workers in the activities of the Fourth CID and their opinions on the diaspora discourse constructed by the IDN. However, an article published on the website Migrant Care, which belongs to the Indonesian Association for Migrant Workers, offers a vantage point on the life of a manual worker (Susilo 2017). The article begins with an appreciation of IDN’s initiative to connect scattered Indonesians overseas and mediate their relations with the Indonesian government. However, the writer then observes how certain larger themes have begun to dominate the IDN’s congresses and activities, such as “Indonesia as the World’s Emerging Power, Competing in the Global Arena, Aerospace and Indonesia’s Future in the Year 2050.” Observing the triumphant narratives and successful faces that decorate the IDN’s events, the article raises an important question: “Do they truly represent the face of the Indonesian diaspora?”

The answer to whom the diaspora discourse represents can be pieced together from public statements and narratives circulating on the meaning of the Indonesian diaspora by members of the IDN. For instance, during a discussion of the Indonesian diaspora in Jakarta, Dino Patti Djalal asserted the importance of showing to the world that the Indonesian diaspora is not only migrant workers, calling for an erasure of this image, as it creates an inferior mentality (Anggoro 2013). This is in line with other narratives that apprehend the IDN’s initiatives as a means of rehabilitating Indonesia’s image, which the network believes has been crystallized for decades by images of migrant manual workers. One case in point is an article written by a laureate of the *Indonesian Diaspora Awards 2012* for the *Youth Activism* category; the piece calls for a reclamation of the meaning of the Indonesian diaspora, which in the past has been linked to low-skilled labor. The article argues that the Indonesian diaspora must now become “a place where Indonesian intellectuals and diplomats from all over the world gather” (Adhitya 2013).

As a whole, the interplay between the strong representation of knowledge workers and elites and the overshadowed representation of manual workers, particularly domestic workers, acts as a form of othering within the discourse of the diaspora. Thus, intriguingly the diaspora’s borders are not defined against the nation-state or against indigenous peoples, as was found in Clifford’s (1994) work of diaspora but are defined internally within members of the diaspora based on class. This process of othering within the diasporic collective is not unique to the Indonesia case. In his work, the anthropologist Donald Nonini (1997) also observed a process of othering occurring within the Chinese diasporic collective and particular those within the Pacific Rim by way of eliding nonelite narratives and representation. He further argues that the act of omitting a certain group of people within a general discourse is a form of “symbolic violence” (Nonini 1997, 223). On that note, the elision of manual workers from the emergent discourse on the Indonesian diaspora promulgated by IDN-Global can in the same vein be read as practices of symbolic violence.

The emergent discourse surrounding IDN-Global thus constructs an exclusive social imaginary of overseas Indonesians that positions members of the elite and professionals as active subjects, while bracketing the ‘rest’ as passive subjects. The valorization of elites and professionals is arguably contingent

on the ascendancy of the knowledge economy. The notion of the knowledge economy has circulated within academic literature and public policy since the 1970s (e.g., Bell 1974). Nevertheless, the notion has been increasingly reinvigorated by the predominantly instrumental function of higher education to produce knowledge workers that will meet the expanding demand for them (Ong 2006). As Ong (2006, 154) argues: "The rise of a class of global professionals armed with 'world-class' credentials may be good for business and scientific research, but these professionals also embody a new form of global ranking based on human capital."

#### **4. Marketization of the Diaspora**

Diaspora discourses in general have sought to represent subjective experiences and struggles of displacement and Benedict Anderson's famous dictum: long-distance nationalism (e.g., Meel 2011; Missbach and Myrntinen 2014). As Clifford (1994, 310) also notes, the "language of diaspora is increasingly invoked by displaced peoples who feel (maintain, revive, invent) a connection with a prior home". However, Greenhouse (2010, 2) argues that the logic of neoliberalism increasingly begins to pervade and reconfigure the "most prominent public relationships that constitute *belonging*". In this part of the essay, I argue that the social relations and social collectiveness that constitute belonging within the discourse of diaspora constructed by IDN are increasingly marketized by a neoliberal logic in a proliferation of self-enterprising activities. In addition, IDN's attempts to "market" the Indonesian diaspora to the Indonesian government also transforms the notion of long-distance nationalism into chains of value.

##### **4.1 Engineering Self-Enterprising Diasporic Subjects**

Examining the range of activities and events held by the IDN, one cannot deny the cogent forces directed at building an enterprise culture. Rose (1990, 5–6) states that the "enterprise culture" not only "designates a kind of organizational form [...] but more generally provides an image of a mode of activity to be encouraged in a multitude of arenas of life [...] to embody the presupposition of the enterprising self, striving for fulfillment, excellence and achievement". The sessions organized by the IDN are saturated with themes that seek to instill the aspiration and discipline of Indonesian diasporic subjects to become their own enterprise, with titles such as "Entrepreneurship and Making Career Choices," "Education and Innovation," "Creative and Knowledge Economy: Ideas from the Diaspora," "Doing Business in the US/Outside Indonesia," "Promoting Indonesian Restaurants in Your Host City," "Marketing Indonesian Signatures," "Creating Jobs and Starting Businesses in Indonesia," and "Becoming Agents or Distributors for Indonesian Products."

The focus on engineering self-enterprising diasporic subjects cannot be separated from the global ranking of capital worth that had been largely constituted by companies and has recently included successful enterprising individuals. Examples of such individuals can be discerned from the names on IDN's board of trustees as well as the sponsors, such as Crown Group and Tanoto Foundation, linked respectively to Iwan Sunito and Dato Sri Tahir, whom Robison (2009) identifies as part of the "domestic Chinese capitalist class" based on his classic work on the rise of the capitalist class in Indonesia. The representation of successful knowledge workers and elites also works to instill an aspiration that would then seek to remodel their self-enterprising features.

However, the range of self-enterprising activities that aim to boost market worth also transforms the self-perception and self-construction of overseas Indonesians in relation to the market. This transformation is carried out at the expense of their civic rights and social collectivity as community members of a diaspora. In

addition, the solidaristic forms traditionally associated with diasporas that are usually invoked upon problems faced by a diaspora or its members are dismantled. Problems faced by diasporic members particularly within the non-professional class, which are mostly employment problems, are thus not seen as a result of structural. Instead, they are construed as individual problems in which the individual is diagnosed to lack self-enterprising skills which are needed to ensure their protection and boost their appeal in the global market (Rose 1989). In other words, the situations faced by diaspora members become framed as matters of personal capacity as indicated in the rise of workshops and trainings on such matters held by IDN-Global in their congresses.

#### 4.2 From Long-Distance Nationalism into Value Chains

It is important to note that the growth of a transnational class of self-enterprising individuals has been received with ambivalence by the Indonesian government. Further, the general attitude of the media has been deeply skeptical and dispiriting. Vice President Jusuf Kalla, for example, rebuked overseas Indonesian scholars as self-serving and profit-oriented individuals (Agriesta 2016). He acknowledges the lack of facilities in Indonesia but nevertheless emphasizes that “Dedication should not only be limited to material things. So, when you return, don’t use a dollar mindset but think about *amal jariah*,” referring to a religious belief shared among Muslims in Indonesia concerning rewards in the hereafter. A similar attitude is reiterated in a speech given by President Joko Widodo during lunch with more than 400 *orang teladan* (role models) from all over Indonesia (Santoso 2016). In his speech, the President extended his appreciation for successful Indonesian nationals overseas but regretted their decision not to return and help develop Indonesia.

The same level of disagreement also resonates among the governments of countries in Asia, particularly as the growth of the transnational class has largely been framed by developmentalist narratives as a “brain drain” for the home country (Lien and Wang 2005, 153). As a result, it has led to state-led strategies to “repatriate” this class. For instance, in the case of South Korea, Yoon (1992) examines the ‘reverse brain drain’ state-led initiative under former President Park Chun Hee in the 1960s by introducing a model of various incentives for overseas Koreans who returned to the country. Meanwhile, in India the emergence of “tech cities,” namely Bangalore and Hyderabad, has even emerged as part of a strategy of drawing American-educated Indian researchers and professionals back home (Chacko 2007).

In response to the challenge put forward by these state authorities and the general climate of disapproval in the region, the IDN has sought to make political compromises with the government by reconceptualizing the issue, from brain drain to capital gain. On many occasions, Dino Patti Djalal has challenged narratives that present the Indonesian diaspora as a manifestation of a brain drain by presenting them as an untapped economic and political resource to benefit the state through taxation, remittance, and advantageous links to different markets (Yulianto 2017). The invitation of American President Barack Obama to the Fourth CID can also be apprehended as a marketing strategy of the IDN to demonstrate to the Indonesian government the links that can be generated from the diaspora.



Figure 4. Indonesia as Obama's Home (Yulianingsih 2017).

Examining the Indonesian context further, one can discern how the social role of public officials has been altered by neoliberalism transforming them into marketers. The emergence of consulting companies like MarkPlus, Inc., which provide a category for public officials in its annual awards for Marketers of the Year has played a role in this change. It will perhaps come with no surprise that in 2012 Dino Patti Djalal received the Marketers of the Year: Government Category award for the creation of the IDN, lauded as an innovative strategy to market Indonesia on a global level (SWAOnline 2012).

The marketization of diasporic subjects and their ties to Indonesia constitute a problem, as it commodifies feelings of longing and belonging, using them as raw materials to create a diasporic enterprise culture and as commodities to be pitched to the government. Furthermore, notions such as long-distance nationalism and affective nationalism, which have been offered both in academic and popular discourse as a way to resolve the tensions between diasporas and nation-states, have been set aside and replaced by capitalist notions of value chains.

## 5. Conclusion

This essay has shown how analyzing the discourse of the Indonesian diaspora in contemporary Indonesia from the vantage point of political economy results in findings that supplement research approaches to diaspora as an exclusively cultural phenomenon. The findings in this research demonstrate a neoliberal reconfiguration of the discourse of the diaspora, which gives a stronger representation to diasporic subjects located higher up in the global ranking of human capital resulting in transnational class stratification. Such reconfiguration indicates an abandonment of notions of solidarity which in were previously associated with diaspora. Furthermore, the marketization of the diaspora plays out by way of the institutionalization of an enterprise culture in the IDN's events and marketing attempts to transform ties between the diaspora and Indonesia into chains of value.

The findings in this research also respond to particular streams of classic Marxist thinking, in which the diasporic subject is deeply romanticized and painted as a liberating force against "oppressive nationalism,

repressive state structures, and capitalism” (Ong 1999, 15). In the context of Indonesia, the Indonesian government does not display oppressive and repressive mechanisms of engaging with diasporic communities. Instead, the relationship between the government and the diasporic collective appears to be entangled and driven by a neoliberal logic. Nonetheless, this study is not an attempt to create a totalizing and pitch-black impression of neoliberalism. Instead, it advocates for a more critical understanding of the multiple ways neoliberal logic operates in collectives which were previously understood in a more cultural, social, and political manner.

For future research, further inquiries could be carried out on the discourse of the Indonesian diaspora by positioning it within the global web of diasporas that have been constructed by many non-state collectives today. For instance, inter-reference could be carried out with the burgeoning of Chinese “scientific diasporas,” such as the Society of Chinese Bioscientists in America and the Chinese Life Scientists Society in the UK, examined by Jonkers (2010). Inter-referencing will eschew studies seeking to highlight unique and isolated cases, which is important at a time when a new class division is being reproduced on a global scale.

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