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**CITIZENSHIP AS EXPERIENCE:  
THE LIVES AND LABOURS OF OVERSEAS INDONESIAN  
SCHOLARS**

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**Abstract**

The “brain train” has emerged as a predominant narrative in developmentalist discourse portraying overseas scholars as unencumbered individuals riding the train from developing to developed countries for social and economic mobility. In this article, we problematize the metaphorical use of “brain” to describe overseas scholars as self-serving calculative individuals by approaching the scholars as subjects whose practices are contingent in specific geopolitical constructs and shaped by hierarchies of emotions. We take into account the individual stories of Indonesian scholars who currently work in Western academic institutions and look at the interplay between emotions and notions of citizenship as experienced and practiced by the scholars. The article contends that emotional relationships with the nation, despite notions of deterritorialization of citizenship, is difficult to escape for it endures and retains its presence despite vulnerabilities and struggles the scholar has to deal with. Further, the tenacity of the scholars’ experiences in the territories they inhabit today not only question the notion of brain train, but also challenges the notions of nation and citizenship imagined and aggressively mobilized by the nation-state.

**Keywords:** Brain Train, Overseas Scholar, Emotion, Citizenship, Nationalism

**Introduction**

In the fall of 1965, 570 Indonesian students commissioned by the Sukarno administration to study abroad and return with new knowledge and technologies found their citizenship hanging by a thread under the Suharto administration (Adam, 2011). These students were subjected to screening processes set up by the military attache in the Indonesian embassies and instructed to sign a statement of loyalty to Suharto’s New Order. Among them were students tied to government service, or known as MAHID (*Mahasiswa Ikatan Dinas*), who refused to sign the statement, as they believed the Sukarno administration was the sole legal government of Indonesia. Their Indonesian citizenships were revoked, and these students soon found themselves struggling to live their lives outside Indonesia, finding institutions where their expertise could be put to use while ceaselessly adjusting and negotiating emotional ties with Indonesia (Sipayung, 2011). Nevertheless, the narrative that was circulated by the New Order crystallized them as willful political subjects with communist agendas.

The story of the MAHID students represents a tiny drop in the growing body of Indonesian scientific diasporas washed ashore by tides of different periods of student migration. It provides a glimpse into the geopolitical specificities behind the formation of scientific diasporas that are often glossed over by the narrative disseminated by the Indonesian government today on overseas Indonesian scholars and researchers. For instance, in an open remark last year, the Minister of Higher Education, Research, and Technology, Mohammad Nasir, referred to overseas Indonesian scholars and researchers as individuals lacking love for their homeland, as they chose to work and contribute to foreign countries (“Menristek: Bela Negara Bisa Cegah”, 2016). Such antagonistic narrative, we argue, not only pushes the scholars to the margins of the nation and inscribes them as disloyal Others, but also furthers the tendency of the globalization discourse to discount scholar migration as human capital flight or the “brain train” (Knight, 2014).

On that account, this article seeks to illuminate the emotional lives and labours of overseas scholars eclipsed by images of unencumbered scholars riding the brain train under the neoliberal cultural system which valorizes individual motives and rational actions over affective structures or collectives (Greenhouse, 2010). Grounding our research in the pathways of Indonesian overseas scholars who currently work in overseas higher education institutions, we begin by probing into the discursive and emotional means that the Indonesian nation-state utilizes to align the scholars’ bodily space with the nation-state. We then consider the experiential particularities of the scholars in encountering and interacting with the nation-state in certain periods of Indonesia’s history, namely Suharto’s regime, post-1998 Indonesia, and global capitalism, to invoke deterritorialized concepts of citizenship and home which are suffused with feelings and emotions. We further argue that that the tenacity of the scholars’ experiences in the territories they inhabit today exceeds and reconfigures the emotional landscapes of nation, belonging, and community imagined and mobilized by the nation-state.

### **The Overseas Scholar and Agency**

The flight of the overseas scholar tends to be painted in the discussion of globalization as transnational flows engendered by “economic rationality bereft of human agency” (Ong, 1999, p. 4). Informed by a top-down design, overseas scholars are disembedded from contingencies of time, space, and history, and are encapsulated in what Knight (2014) observes as the “brain train” narrative. Since the 1960s, the brain metaphor has been coupled with the movement of a class of educated and professional individuals (Haque, 2007). In the case of the overseas scholar, such metaphorical thinking, we argue, poses significant problem of method as it commodifies the scholars’ experience by offering a condensed image of the scholar who is self-serving and calculative. Such condensation is in line with what Caliskan and Callon identify as the ‘economization’ of areas and practices conventionally thought to be non-economic which forms “a governing rationality extending a specific formulation of economic values, practices, and metrics to every dimension of human life” (2009 in Brown, 2015, p. 29).

On the other hand, within postcolonial scholarship there is the tendency to subsume the overseas scholar, particularly those coming from the “Third World” and are affiliated with Western academic institutions, under the political possibilities of individual agency. Such liberatory task of the overseas intellectual is exemplified by Edward Said in his romantic account of the “modern intellectual exile” defined as one who “will not make the

adjustment, preferring instead to remain outside the mainstream, unaccommodated, uncoopted, resistant” (1994, p. 116). Hamid Dabashi presents a darker side of the overseas intellectual in his book *Brown Skin, White Masks* (2011), examining the ‘intellectual comprador’ who instead of being a node of resistance complies and adjusts serving no particular cause except themselves and the ‘empire.’ In that sense, Said and Dabashi represent two sides of the same coin with their glorification of the overseas scholar’s autonomy.

We find this romantic approach of unfailingly attributing resistance to the pathways of the overseas scholars problematic, as it risks falling into the binary mode of the ‘exilic intellectual’ (Said, 1994) and the ‘comprador intellectual’ (Dabashi, 2011); one who refuses to assume “innocence while carrying a backpack full of explosive ideas” (Dabashi, 2011, p. 39). As Ong (1999, p. 16) reminds us when approaching the diaspora subject in general, it is important to consider their embeddedness in different regimes and particularities in order to give rise to “complicated accommodations, alliances, and creative tensions” they experience. Furthermore, tying the overseas scholar to the act of resistance instrumentalizes their agencies as “causal agency,” thus reducing their agencies to mere results of competing discourses (Foucault, 1984; in Butler, 2008, p. 26).

In this paper, we argue for reinvented theoretical conceptualizations of the flight of the overseas scholar that captures the limits of their agency and at the same time reconsiders the centrality of emotions in their encounter and interaction with the nation-state. We thus aim to make porous the theoretical boundaries that have boxed the relationship between overseas scholars, the modern state, and their sense of nationalism, specifically by teasing out the discursive structures that the scholars have to be in constant conversation with throughout their career trajectory. Therefore, borrowing the words of Butler, we approach the overseas scholar as a subject who is “neither fully determined nor radically free, but is one whose struggle or primary dilemma is to be produced by a world even as one must produce oneself in some way” (2008, p. 28).

As the mode of inquiry, this article employs ethnography though not in the conventional anthropological sense of fieldwork and foreign ventures but “experience-based inquiry into the interpretive, institutional, and relational makings of the present” (Greenhouse, 2010, p. 2). As for the Indonesian overseas scholars whom we ground our research in they currently reside and work in different parts of Canada, the United States, and Australia, and are deeply informed by different permutations of cosmopolitanism engendered by the postcolonial nation-state, authoritarianism and global capitalism.

### **Emotions and the Alignment of Bodily Space**

In light of the heightened transnational flows of people and hasty conclusions over the end of the nation-state, Ong poses the question: “But are political borders becoming insignificant or is the state merely fashioning a new relationship to capital mobility and to manipulations by citizens and noncitizens alike?” (1999, p. 2). This question, albeit provocative, critically interrogates attempts carried out by modern nation-states to increase engagement with their transnational communities and diaspora populations. Amidst the different types of populations, scientific diasporas are the ones who enter narratives of success and are mostly ‘targeted’ compared to the ‘nonelite’ populations who are associated with low-skill occupations. The PRC, for example, has numerous organizations like the the

Society of Chinese Bioscientists in America, the Chinese Life Scientists Society in the UK, and the Chinese Network of Life-sciences in the Netherlands (Jonkers, 2010).

Scientific diasporas are received with a more dual nature in Indonesia, as academics are assigned multiple roles by the government in the ongoing agenda of nation-building. Hadiz and Dhakidae note the intimate relationship between Indonesian academics and the government since the New Order, observing the active “embedding of academia in bureaucracy” (2005, p. 7 in Gellert, 2014). Nevertheless, the government under the presidency of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in 2012 launched the Indonesian Diaspora Network (IDN) which today serves as the official platform for the Indonesian diaspora with bases in more than 40 countries. However, the themes of selected by IDN for its annual conferences continue to revolve around the narratives of *pulang kampung* (homecoming) and *bhakti bangsa* (serving the nation), thus positioning the overseas Indonesians in a place where they relentlessly need to prove their allegiance to the nation-state.

Since Indonesia’s independence, an unprecedented scale of Indonesians has travelled abroad, particularly to the West, for various kinds of government-sponsored research and study and commissioned with the duty to bring new knowledge and technologies back to Indonesia to help the country ‘catch up’ with the rest of the world. Nevertheless, there has been many scholarly debate on the inadequacy of the modern nation-state to serve as a basis for affective identification, particularly under global capitalism (Duara, 1997; Hau and Tejapira, 2011). Under these conditions, the modern nation-state often seeks to deploy “the frequently older, extraterritorial narratives of racial and cultural community” in localizing their subjects (Duara, 1997, p. 39). In the case of Indonesia, we observe the role of emotions that are promulgated in the public domain and work to align the bodily space of the Indonesian scholars and the nation-state.

In their work, Nonini and Ong identify the modern nation-state as part of contemporary regimes of truth and power that requires the “localization of disciplinable subjects” and entails “allotting them to specific proper places and putting them “in their place”” (1997, p. 23-24). In line with Nonini and Ong (1997), Sara Ahmed in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2014) identifies the ‘soft touch’ of the nation through the valorization of certain kind of emotions that seek to align desirable subjects while pushing the less desirable ones to the margins of the nation. Based on a reading of texts centering around selected Indonesian scholar ‘role models’ that circulate in the public domain, we argue that localization of the Indonesian scholar does not operate based on the Darwinian model which subordinates emotions to ratio as represented by the brain metaphor but elevates emotions of love and attachment to the nation-state while trivializing these very emotions when felt toward the lover, particularly the ‘foreign’ lover.

In numerous studies, Sutan Sjahrir, the Dutch-educated Indonesian intellectual behind the Indonesian nationalist movement in the 1950s, is often taken as the classical entry point and somewhat role model to investigate Indonesia’s nationalism and the role of the Indonesian intellectuals (Legge, 1988; Mrazek, 1994). In April 1932, the *Sumatera Post* published an article titled “the Lady in a Sarong and Kebaya: Under Police Surveillance” problematizing the unorthodox nature of a Dutch woman who often strolled down the streets of Medan in North Sumatera dressed like the local “native” women. The lady was Maria Duchateu-Sjahrir and the first wife of Sutan Sjahrir. In Indonesia, however, Sjahrir’s brief marriage with Maria is always addressed as a fleeting experience compared to his marriage with Siti Wahyunah. Maria’s role was often positioned as in interlocutor for Sjahrir in

expressing his estrangement toward his own gentler after returning from his studies in the Netherlands (Sjahrir, 1949).

Similar to Sjahrir and Maria, the romantic relations between B.J. Habibie, the third Indonesian president, and Ilona, a German woman he met during his studies in Aachen, Germany, is also treated as peripheral in his political trajectory. In Indonesia, Habibie is often invoked as an exemplary intellectual figure and popularly represented in movies, namely *Habibie and Ainun* (2012) and *Rudy Habibie* (2016). In a popular biography written on the formative years of Habibie which inspired the movie *Rudy Habibie*, Habibie's relationship with Ilona was received with animosity by fellow Indonesian students. During his student years in the 1950s, Habibie became involved in the formation of Indonesian student organizations in Germany that sought to promote Indonesian nationalism among the students and maintain connection with Indonesia. In an altercation young Habibie had with another Indonesian student, the issue that came up with having a *noni* as a partner was the issue of nationalism. The question proposed toward Habibie that struck him quiet was "Will your *noni* join you to think about the future of this nation?" (Noer, 2015, p. 112).

In a chapter titled "Love Under Threat," Badiou (2009) argues that in order to remain animated and continue to contribute to knowledge production one must not only assume the roles of the savant and the activist, but also the artist and the lover. In this resituated context, spousal love bears no transgression toward the subject formation of the Indonesian intellectuals but are instead conditions that allow them to creatively and productively engage knowledge production. Nevertheless, their relationships to foreigner, in this case Maria and Ilona, are perceived to be inconveniences and hurdles that the intellectuals must overcome in order to fully become the 'ideal' Indonesian subject according to the dominant truth claims and narratives regarding the 'national body' in Indonesia.

What is interesting is that a small part of the trajectories of the overseas Indonesian scholars we came across in this research hinged on the serendipitous encounters with non-Indonesians. Many of them had no aspiration of establishing an intellectual career outside Indonesia and had always envisioned their return to Indonesia after completing their studies as the final chapter. However, the decision to remain abroad is the result of a heavy-hearted negotiation with their partners who are generally scholars as well. Unlike the overseas Indonesian scholars, their partners would graduate with the burden of student debt loan which is characteristic of neoliberal higher education mechanisms in countries like the United States. Thus, their work options become limited to countries with the highest salaries for scholars. In this sense, the flexibility performed by the Indonesian scholar to secure a job in countries with high salaries for scholars is thus not driven by the social and economic motives as written by Liu (1999) in her research on overseas Chinese scholars but as an act of love which they have translated into the principle of 'staying together.'

For those whose partners are of Indonesian citizenship, unexpectedly their decisions to stay abroad also stemmed from an act of companionship toward their partners who had not yet completed their studies. One of our respondents shared the story on how she applied for a position as an adjunct lecturer in a small college in order to financially survive. Such a decision would seem senseless when one looks back at her previous tenured position at a prominent state university in Indonesia which she had to resign from until read and made sense from the standpoint of love.

In that sense, what we witness here is not the relegation of emotions as a sign of primitive behavior but what Ahmed calls as a hierarchy between emotions in which "some

emotions are ‘elevated’ as signs of cultivation, whilst others remain ‘lower’ signs of weakness” (2014, p. 4). The fact that the larger part of the scholars we talked to showed slight hesitancy to talk about their partners when discussing their decisions to reside abroad also indicate their awareness that talks about spousal emotions are weaker than emotions felt for the nation-state. In that sense, the framing of Indonesian scholars who decide to remain in the West as self-serving individuals who are rational and calculative subjects planning itineraries to move up to the “best” places disregards their vulnerabilities and struggles as humans to feel love not only for the nation but for the significant other and family.

### **Experiencing Nationalism as Feelings**

The production of a nation and the sense of nationalism is often intensely experienced as emotions not just because one stays in the country. Anderson cautions that “we need to consider carefully how they have come into historical being, in what ways the meanings have changed over time, and why, today, they command such profound emotional legitimacy” (2006, p.4). The exiled, oppositional, ‘cosmopolitan’ scholars we talked to have always imagined themselves as part of Indonesia, although it is often imagined in part as their desire to revise and rethink Indonesia’s history and social realities in relation to their positionality as someone who do not live *in* the country and spend most of their time in Western academia. In other words, “experiences of displacement and discrimination” (Hau & Tēchaphīra, 2011, p.10) have helped the scholars re-imagine their relationship to the nation. Having to move, study, and live in the United States while Suharto’s regime crescendo of fear did not necessarily create romantic, intellectual renegades (Said, 1996) of the academics we interviewed. On the other hand, contributions to knowledge production in relation to their studies on Indonesia do not necessarily make the scholars feel like they could give up their cosmopolitan citizenship. The academic’s relationship with the nation, therefore, should be understood as constant negotiations with the nation and their experiences of a sense of nationalism.

Suharto’s regime had very little room for criticism, making it a prime reason for a number of academics during that time to resist his regime by leaving the country. Noted historical moments of tension with the state marked the moments when the scholars we interviewed decided to leave Indonesia, specifically the Malari Incident in 1974 and the May Riots in 1998 followed by the downfall of Suharto in the same year. Nevertheless, we cannot assume that the fact that they had to leave Indonesia diminished their sense of nationalism. We urge for a rethinking of a sense of nationalism that takes a more irrational, emotional sense of love for the nation, rather than just an imagined community, a sense of proximity, to a more *personal, intense, and often incomprehensible umbilical relationship*. Here, we see feelings generated by one’s relationship with the nation as part of messy processes (Ahmed, 2004), as one of our respondents who was exiled from Indonesia recalled:

“I feel that when the time came, I was ready to be imprisoned. And then I became an exile because I criticize development projects (*pembangunan*)...I believed in that..to the extent I was willing to confront the army...I feel my nationalism has been tested in a really severe way, so people who don’t know about it, then, they can shut up (*nggak usah ngomong*). You have your opinion, I have my experience.”

The quote above, by an academic whose life was threatened with imprisonment under Suharto’s regime because of her critique and social justice movements, reveals that a

sense of nationalism stays with her. She reveals that her actions were caused because of the love of the nation and her desire to make it 'right.' Her sense of nationalism did not diminish despite her having to stay out of the country for more than a decade and being unable to visit the motherland without threats and security issues. This sense of nationalism is difficult to escape for it endures and retains its presence despite difficulties that have been faced by the subject. It is perhaps "installed in the soft tissues of affect" (Closs Stephens, 2016, p.182).

Suharto's New Order was "at once a place of hope, terror, alienation, and inspiration" (Lan, 2011, p. 32), and its developmentalist reasoning marginalized and triggered the scholars to continue their oppositional and intellectual engagement to rethink what the nation-state should be. Nevertheless, we also have to underline that as critical as the scholars could be, they are unable to move away from a sense of belonging to the nation. This, in effect, pushes them to be strategic in continuing their studies while maintaining close proximity to Indonesia not by *staying inside* the country, but rather *taking Indonesia with them* in their studies and in their academic projects. As one of the respondents we talked to revealed, "Indonesia becomes a house which I carry around with me like a turtle." This could perhaps be a case of "long-distance nationalism" (Anderson, 1998).

There is indeed a different sense of attachment to post-1998 Indonesia. Those who spent their time studying overseas while Suharto was in power finds it difficult to move on from the pain and fear inflicted by the government, making living overseas was particularly more preferable because of the impossibility of staying inside due to real physical harm. Nevertheless, after the fall of Suharto in 1998, there is a very different negotiation going on with how the scholars perceive the way they attach and contribute to Indonesia. We find three main arenas of contribution: practical academic projects, theoretical academic contribution, and social movement.

While staying in the United States, two of our respondents find that their connection with Indonesia and Indonesian people remains because they are able to propose ideas and provide services they believe to be useful: providing curriculum ideas for elementary school and teaching an online course for Indonesians through Skype. While others see their more rigorous theoretical contributions help maintain their sense of Indonesian-ness. Knowledge production in this way is seen as key because it requires, they believe, not physical presence, but rather a connection in thought process and knowledge production. In other words, they see that putting Indonesia front and center in their intellectual, theoretical engagement as a form of nationalism. Third is their ability to partake in social justice efforts, specifically through forming and participating in groups that voice out social concerns and demands justice. Their participation in such emancipatory political activities is seen as key in developing critical sense of nationalism.

The decision to stay outside while contributing in three arenas above may stem from a new form of governance in Indonesia. If Suharto's regime limited the spaces of intellectual inquiry allowed for the academics with real physical hazards, post-1998 Indonesia actually allows the academics to "choose". Here, we argue that self-enterprising individuals as manifestation of neoliberal governmentality (Kelly, 2013) need to be understood not only as "the self as enterprise" but also in relation to contingencies in life they have to deal with that makes them "human". In other words, analysis on neoliberal subjects and the *becoming* of academics in a neoliberal era does not always cease various interrelated factors, events, emotional elements that makes the subjects more than "entrepreneurial, active, autonomous, prudential, risk aware, choice making and responsible" individuals (Kelly, 2013, p.14).



## **Rethinking Citizenship**

The peril of construing overseas Indonesian scholars in relation to the nation-state in which returning is interpreted as an act of nationalism while remaining abroad proves otherwise is that it produces an analysis bereft of human vulnerabilities and struggles. As such, one of the most important move that we need to do is to think beyond the argument of the academic's compliance or oppositional relationship with the host country. Almost all of the academics we interviewed studied in the United States with Fulbright scholarship. One could easily find Dabashi's description, following Appiah, of a comprador intellectual, agreeable. However, we believe it is first foundationally necessary to look into the complications generated by contingencies that we may have overlooked in the lives of the scholars. Especially, when we look into the messy realities the academics, whom Dabashi may call comprador intellectual, have lived in. He claims that "[c]omprador intellectuals have always been close to the mobilized center of power—which in this rapidly globalizing world might be just about anywhere but is increasingly at the center of empire" (43). How should we think about such claim on positionality? Does being at or near the center of power (both in physical and metaphorical sense) necessarily entails compliance? Do we see power at works stronger because one is closer to the center? Or could we see it in a different light, that being near the center actually provides a space, an opportunity, for the overseas academics to further their own commitment to Indonesia?

We found that citizenship no longer represents one's loyalty to a nation-state, nor does it reflect one's desire to stay physically in the 'homeland'. If Dabashi is able to reveal that through globalization an empire does not necessarily needs a physical center--rather, globalization allows dispersed sense of the empire's location--making the intellectual comprador omnipresent, we also need to dissect one's affinity to their homeland, to their idea of nationalism. Ong reminds us: "The realignment of political, ethnic, and personal identities is not necessarily a process of "win or lose," whereby political borders become "insignificant" and the nation-state "loses" to global trade in terms of its control over the affiliations and behavior of its subjects" (1999, p.2-3).

One respondent recalled that his attempt to further the study of Indonesia was often limited to his Indonesian passport. When he changed his citizenship, allowing him to get hold of a Western country's passport, he found it "liberating" as he no longer needs to take care of visa processing to travel to different places, working on different research projects *on* Indonesia. Such seemingly banal issue, as passport and visa, reveals that structure and spaces of travel imposed by dominating power (any American or British academic can travel almost everywhere with their passport) do not limit 'strategies' that the academics have to focus on his nationalist goals while teaching and living overseas.

Such case of destabilization of citizenship (Ong, 2005) could be framed as means owned only by elites such as the overseas academics. Nevertheless, we should see how the deterritorialization of citizenship in the cases of Indonesian overseas scholars do not necessarily relates with diminishing sense of nationalism. If we see them, rather, as members of mobilized population who are conditioned by particular national and global governmentality, we could see that negotiations and re-configuration of the concept of citizenship and nationalism are undeniable parts of their existence.

### **Feeling at Home in Academic Spaces**

Often theoretical discussions regarding the concept of ‘home’ for travelling subjects in general are bounded by the territorial concept of a home country or a hometown. However, a pattern that also emerged from our interviews with the Indonesian scholars was a non-territorial concept of home that took the form of academic spaces where the scholars felt they could thrive and roam intellectually. Samuel (2010) in his book on the intimacy between the social sciences and geopolitical power in Indonesia identifies how the nature of rigid discipline-based research and developmentalist themes taught and researched in Indonesian universities is the result of the operations of power since colonial times. In Indonesia, until today there is prohibition on teaching values outside *Pancasila* as the national ideology as crystallized in TAP MPRS Number 25 Year 1966 and Law No. 27 Year 1999 on acts of crime related to state security. Linearity in discipline also extends from teaching to research and is ‘normalized’ not only by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Technology, but also the scholars in Indonesian universities, hence making interdisciplinary research in Indonesia a hollow trend.

As for the respondents who all focus on social sciences and humanities research, their studies abroad brought them in close encounter with progressive leftist and critical theories that they observe has no space in Indonesia. One of our respondents upon completing his doctoral program visited a university in Indonesia where he used to teach at and showed his dissertation to a fellow colleague. The response he received was that the references used in the dissertation had transgressed the boundaries of their discipline, not to mention a large portion of the references were biased with leftist thinking. Thus, he feels at home and refreshed in the academic spaces provided by his university, which allows him to transgress boundaries of discipline and theorize avant-garde perspectives on how to read and understand Indonesia.

Regarding linearity, one of the respondents recalls her choice to venture from Linguistics to Media Studies as a decision which was not understood by her colleagues in the university where she used to work. In the Indonesian academic environment, one is expected to maintain a linearity from undergraduate to doctorate level in the same discipline and the decision to take Media Studies was thought to disrupt this linearity. In their research on emotions circulating among scholars at ‘home’ in the university departments, Thorne and Hochschild (1997, p. 517) observe the flaring of strong feelings here and there to stem from the notion that “departments are like families.” Hence, in situations where they do not get the ‘support’ from their ‘family,’ members of a department can feel estranged and ‘alienated’.

The issue of the dormant nature of research in Indonesian universities in comparison to the Western academia also emerged. Recently, there have been top-down restructuralization processes which introduce research publication incentives that are expected to be able to boost the number of research publication incentives at a university. In a working paper series on Reforming Research in Indonesia: Policies and Practice, Rakhmani and Siregar (2016) write about how the rigid and inactive nature of Indonesian research stems from the insularity of Indonesian scholars and their lack of integration and engagement in international research networks. However, for one of our respondents the issue at stake is not regarding the insularity of Indonesian academics but the insularity of Indonesian scholarly work. Her concern with the works published on Indonesia today is that it writes about Indonesia with Indonesian interlocutors in mind, thus by design fails to engage with

interlocutors in other countries. In a time when Indonesia no longer matters in the geopolitical context compared to larger Asian countries like India and China, she feels that being an Indonesian scholar in the Western academia allows her to engage with a wider range of interlocutors.

## **Conclusion**

As part of the contemporary constellation of agency, localization, and the regime of the nation-state, the overseas scholar thus finds herself in the heart of vying interests, perspectives, and epistemologies. In this paper we try to go beyond the glorification of overseas academics and their potentials that lock us in binary oppositions and rather force open a more intricate analysis on the overseas Indonesian academics whose lives are never without entanglement in contingencies that are messy, fluid, and unpredictable. By scrutinizing the academics' vulnerabilities and struggles we found that a sense of nationalism is glued to the academics' lives despite threats, challenges, and possibility of a more open, cosmopolitan subjectivity. The academics constantly re-strategize and re-configure their intellectual endeavors in relation to Indonesia as they faced different forms of regulations from the state as well as Indonesian academic environment.

From there we obtained a different picture of home for the overseas Indonesian scholars, in addition to their physical imaginings, and that is the intellectual home provided by Western academia. It is this non-territorial home that provides the space for the overseas Indonesian scholars to re-articulate their experiences and imaginings of Indonesia. Further, we urge an analysis on intellectuals or academics to include 'act of love', which we see as a determining factor among overseas Indonesian scholars. It is often seen as an inferior kind of emotion in contrast to the love for homeland; however, by considering such element we can take the analysis beyond a perspective of nation and citizenship that is restricted to state-bound physical borders.

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