

# Indonesian Movie Industry After The Reformation Era

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**Abstract.** Indonesian Movie as an object of this research is not only sees from their economic value but also social, cultural, and spiritual values. Movies as cultural products have economic values that can give economic benefits to the development. In fact, this is the essence of the problem. One of the objectives of the research is to know if movies as cultural products have certain role in, and power over, the nation culture building. Those involved in the movie-making: producers, directors, actors and actresses, and the necessary technology, are chosen as subjects of this research, beside some supporting actors/players such as government agency (censorship institution), cinema owner, and movie-critics. The methodology used as the analysis instrument is discourse analysis, which is a qualitative analysis. The research method consist of background literature, movie-related document research, and interviews. From total 737 movies over period 20 years, these quantitative data are processed and classified into 2 categories. The primary data gathered interviews with 13 informants, namely movie makers, actors, and government agencies. Bourdieu's theory of habitus and capital, are used in this analysis. The research result shows that the dynamic of Indonesian movies after the Reformation Era is colored with theme varieties, innovation, and the reduction of government involvement. Dominations and power now are at the hands of producers who have higher or stronger cultural capital. Rooms for free expressions after the Reformation Era have been pioneered by the independent communities with their indie movies. Hence, a good culture strategy can actually make possible the building of the desired national culture through movies.

**Keywords:** movie, reformation era, cultural capital.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The era of Reformation in Indonesia began with the fall of Soeharto in 1998. Since then, Indonesia has been in a period of transition. This is due to a more open and liberal political and social environment in Indonesia after the Revolution of 1998 forced the resignation of the authoritarian President Soeharto and ending the three decades of the New Order period.

The current period has been characterized by a careful political balance between long established sociopolitical norms and several emerging forces in Indonesian society. The reformation have impact on many areas such as business, politics, and other socio-economy including movie industry. The process of reformasi in Indonesia has also been characterized by greater freedom of speech.

Movie is a motion-picture, it's interesting since it has an audio-visual feature that is easy to watch and understand. Movie or film produces the strong impression of reality. The combination of the reality of motion and the appearance of forms gives us the feeling of concrete life and the perception of objective reality. A definition about movie and cinema as a media culture is as follows :

*“A media culture in which images, sounds, and spectacles help produce the fabric of everyday life, dominating leisure time, shaping political views and social behavior and providing the materials out of which people forge their very identities. A film can help us to understand what is going on in contemporary societies and cultures...”* (Kellner, D., 1995)

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Film is also a medium for the creator to tell the story about reality, give the meaning and to criticize it. As a medium, the creator could pour their expression, imagination and creativity about the future. A movie can influence the thinking of the audience. In other words, a movie could contribute to the character building of its audience. Through the messages, the film broadens its audience knowledge. Movies as an intellectual and economic activity could also contribute to the prosperity of a country. For instance, movie industry gives 40% to the GDP of USA. A film industry and associated (advertising and television) has been identified as a significant contributor to the UK economy: 8% to GDP and 15% from the export amount.

It is obvious now, how a movie should not only be seen from its economic value, or just as a media culture, but movie as a whole values: social, cultural, economy or even spiritual value. In fact, this is the essence of the problem. One of the objectives of the research is to know if movie as a media culture has a certain role in, and power over, the nation character building.

## 2. THE ANALYSIS

### 2.1. ON MOVIE INDUSTRY

The movie business or movie industry is unusual, and arguably, different to mainstream industry that we commonly analyze. It may be difficult to consider film as an industry due to the uniqueness. A definition of movie industry :

*“... in the film industry every project is a prototype. There is no chance to redesign a bad movie. You either make a good film and sell it, or you make a stinker. And unless you have had to face an investor in your movie asking you where their money went, you really don't know the true meaning of 'pain'!”* (Pratt, A.C. & Gornostaeva, G., 2005)

The film industry is big, complex and strange. It is big for the reason of huge amount of resources used and return on the production and distribution. It is complex, for the reason of different characteristics from other (mainstream) industries, and the complexity not only for its constant innovation and project-based nature; but also because it is high risk and unconventional. Finally, the film is a strange business. Strange in that huge amount of money is involved, and sometimes to little direct effect. A recent example is the headline of “The Lord of The Ring” film: ‘producer gains 94m pound sterling and he didn't even work on the film...’ a film which 70% of its production done throughout the computer. (Pratt, A.C., Gornostaeva, G., 2005)

The differences between other manufacturing industry and film industry (FI) make the unique characteristics of FI as: (i) unique dynamic process, (ii) big, huge, and strange, (iii) a film always available to ‘change’ in the process of production. The process of film production is divided into: (i) physical take, and (ii) post-production in laboratory. The steps are: conception → production (+post prod) → distribution → consumption → file and critique. All the process and procedures are invisible in watching the cinema.

### 2.2. Bourdieu's Theory of Habitus, Field, Capital and Strategy

The work of Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) --an intellectual and sociologist from France-- have given a big contribution to the social science. He tried to construct a general theory of practice. This has been established through the creation of method with which we may grasp the many levels of practical life, using an economic metaphor. The intention of Bourdieu's work can be seen to transcend this opposition between two conceptions of scientific knowledge, and to transform them into a dialectical relationship between structure and agency.

His main ideas about Habitus are as follows :

*“Habitus refers to a set of dispositions, created and reformulated through the conjuncture of objective structures and personal history. Dispositions are acquired in social positions within a field and imply a subjective adjustment to that position.”* (Harker R., et al, 1990)

For instance, in the behavior of a person, such an adjustment that often implied through the person's sense of social distance or even in their body postures. Thus one's place and one's habitus form the basis of friendship, love and other personal relationship, as well as transforming theoretical classes into real groups.

The conception of field which Bourdieu uses is not to be considered as a field with fence around it, but rather as a 'field of forces' because it is required to see this field as dynamic, a field in which various potentialities exist. The definition of capital is very wide for Bourdieu and includes material things (which can have symbolic value), as well as the intangible things but culturally significant attributes such as prestige, status, and authority (referred to as symbolic capital), along with cultural capital (defined as culturally-values taste and consumption patterns).

There are four category of capital: (i) material (economy) (ii) cultural (iii) social, and (iv) symbolic capital. Each capital is also seen by Bourdieu to be a basis of domination –although not always recognized as such by participants. These various types of capital can be exchanged for other types of capital, that is capital is convertible. The most powerful conversion to be made is to symbolic capital.

### 2.3. The Analysis

The observation start in 1988 (10 years before reformation) and the end of 2008 (10 years after reformation). The result of 737 films documents –from “Katalog Film Indonesia 1988-2008”–after analysed and translated into graph is as follow:

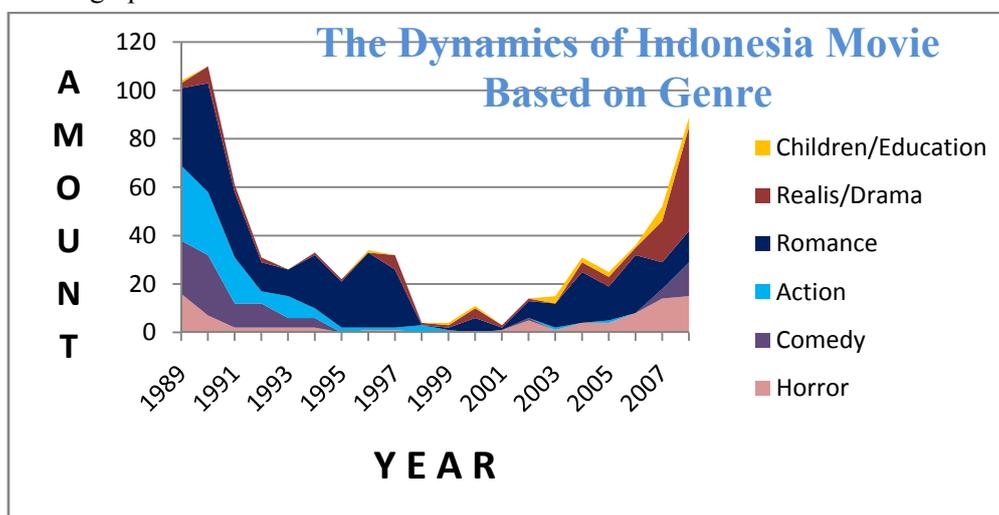


Figure 1. The translation of the dynamics of Indonesian Movie Industry from number to graph (by the author)

Until 1998, Indonesia movies are colored with romantic, action and horror theme mixed with erotic. Comedy and drama were the runner up, while movie for children or education was the third. At the end of 1998, a realism movie called “Kuldesak” came up. This movie was different from the other in that, it told about friendship among young people, viewed and told by themselves.

After 1999, Indonesia movie start with a ‘new look, new approaches’. There are many other story to tell than all cinema before. A story about love and friendship for example –which is always ‘full-house’—made by a different way, an interesting way. There were more choices for the audience. With many younger crew, younger director or actor and actress, they gave a different story, a ‘rich’ dialog that was so interesting. The domination of power changing from those movie-maker with economy and symbolic capital ownership, into cultural and social capital ownership as follow:

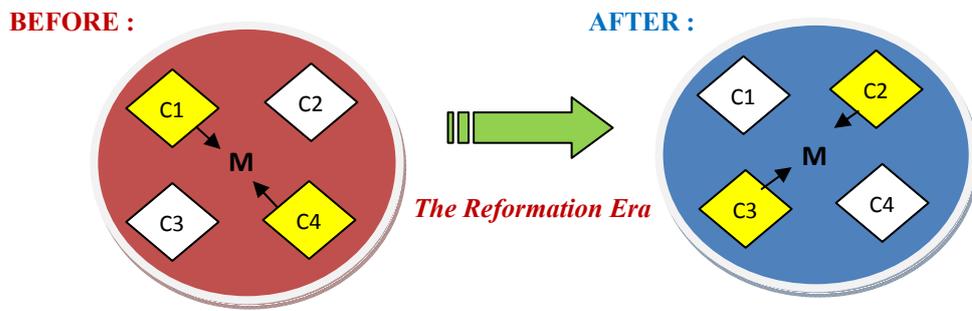


Figure 2 : Changing in Capital Ownership (by author)

(C1: Economy Capital, C2 : Cultural Capital, C3 : Social Capital, C4 : Symbolic Capital)

From 15 sources, Ariani Darmawan is one of indie movie-maker stays in Bandung. From the discourse with her, the story of independent (indie) movie in Indonesia shown by the picture:

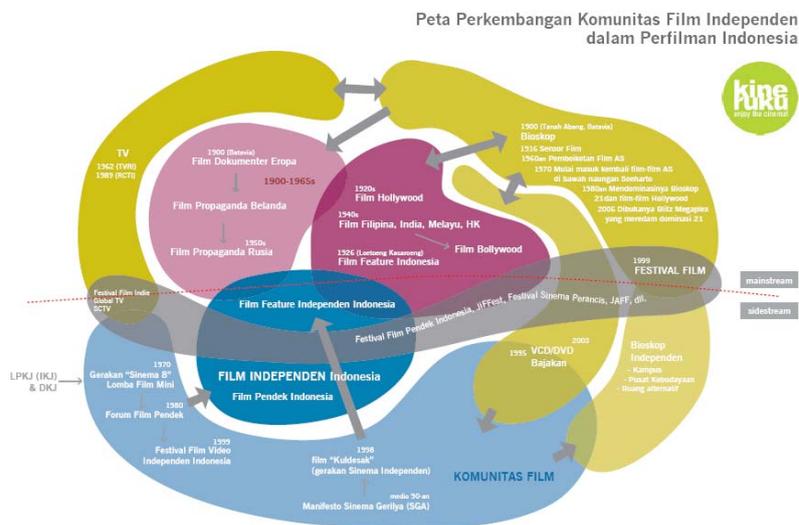


Figure 3 : 'indie-movie movement' (source : "Rumah Buku", by Ariani Darmawan, 2007)

## 2.4. The Interpretations

The research result shows that the dynamic of Indonesian movies after the Reformation Era is colored with theme varieties, innovations, and the reduction of government involvement. Dominations and power now are at the hands of producers who have higher cultural and social capital. Rooms for free expressions after the Reformation Era have been pioneered by the independent communities with their indie movies. Hence, a good culture strategy can actually make possible the building of the desired national culture through movies.

Social capital that emphasize the family ties, now changing to social capital that emphasize professionalism. The all network is changing. The new freedom and democracy after reformation era had reduce the significant of symbolic capital –inheritance by 'big name'. The network and professionalism is more important now.

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