Social Science Revitalization in Indonesia

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Abstract

The first time Social Science in Indonesia appeared in the 19th century oriented more to the applied matters or to the problem solving rather than the science development. *Indologie* is the name of science that discuss about the cultural social that it carries and it was taught to the administrators and the practitioners. Indigenization of the social science started from the opinion that by developing the concept, assumption and theory from the social phenomena in Indonesia. Unfortunately, social and reality phenomena in Indonesia are different from the social reality and phenomena from other countries'. This article is divided into three parts. The first, it describes the genealogy of the social science. The second, it sees the importance of historical, comparative and theoretical ability and philosophy ability in improving and empowering the social science. The third, it describes the theoretical and practical implication from various knowledge in developing and empowering the social science in Indonesia.

Keywords: social science, indigenization, revitalization.

Background

In the last few recent decades, the social science development has become an important attention and it was debated widely by the social scientists in Indonesia (Soemantri 2005, Alatas 1993 & Alatas 2001). Practically, the background of this matter is the inability of the social science to answer the problems faced by the society and the nation. The social science's entrapment and dependency on the concept, theory and assumption developed by Western are considered as one of the causes. Theoretically social science in Indonesia is considered/judged not able to produce theories with high abstraction levels born from the Indonesian social phenomena (Alatas 2001 & Soemantri 2005). Facing those problems, people give various reactions. One of the reactions that get enough attention is an effort to improve the social science which was born from the reality and social phenomena in Indonesia or we call it the social science indigenization (Kleden 1987, Alatas 2001 & Soemantri 20015).

The social science indigenization comes from the opinion that by developing the concept, assumption and theory that are from the social phenomena in Indonesia, the social science will have ability to produce theory with certain high abstraction levels (high) that can compete with the social theories in the world and it also can empower the theory to solve social problems in Indonesia. In a simple way, the social science indigenization comes from the assumption that Indonesia is unique. The Indonesian reality and social phenomena are different from other countries', therefore; the theoretical approach, assumption and the social science concept developed by Western are considered not relevant with the situation in Indonesia; therefore, practically it cannot answer the social problems in Indonesia (Kleden 1987 & Alatas 2001).

This article comes from the assumption that is different from the previous assumption. The first, the problem that the social science is not an applied science is not suitable for Indonesia. In the mid 20th century, some western social scientists gave an attention to an issue that the social science was not an applied science in the western society. In 1979 Linblom and Cohen wrote a book entitled "Useable knowledge" as a respond towards many criticisms given to the social science (Lindblom & Cohen

1979). In America, the disappointment towards the social science could be seen from the failure of the Great Society program released by President Lundon B Johnson in 1964-1965. Johnson believed that if America could land someone on the moon, the same skill could be used to handle the poverty problem and the racial imbalance in America. Unfortunately, the program that involved many scientists was considered to be failed to reach the goals expected/promised before. (Fischer 2003).

The second, colonialism and globalization have produced the world order that has characteristic of 'uniformity'. The modernization phenomena in the third world including Indonesia cannot be separated from the global influences (Colombijn & Comte 2015). However, it needs to be highlighted that this article does not say that the social phenomena in Indonesia are fully the same as the social phenomena in the other countries. On the contrary, this article has opinion that every social problem has its own uniqueness.

It was started with those problems; this article aims to revitalize the social science in Indonesia. This article is divided into three parts. The first, it describes the genealogy of the social science. The second, it sees the importance of historical, comparative and theoretical ability and philosophy ability to develop and empower the social science. The third, it describes the theoretical and practical implication from various knowledge in developing and empowering the social science in Indonesia.

The direction and the study of the social science

The study on the history of the Social Science has often been done. Generally, the social science was born along with the social transformation that happened to Europe and America in the 19th century and in the early 20th century; the social science was born to increase the knowledge about society and politics, the big events like the enlightenment era, American and French Revolution, Industrial Revolution, Revolutionary Movement, gave the impact on the society transformation from the traditional form to the modern one (Wagner , Weiss, et al. 1991, Wagner 2001, Best 2003). The transformation made the 'new world' and new social reality born. The social science from very beginning appeared as a means to understand the effect of the problem appeared from that transformation (Wagner 2001 & Porter 2003). The issue related to the society rationalization, development, capitalism, national economy development, advanced technology, the appearance of the representative institution and the other social transformation becomes the main focus of the social science (Wagner, Weiss, et al.1991).

The intellectual tradition of the social science from the beginning did not only have purpose to understand and explain the transformation effect. The social science also takes part in the social transformation process. Based on the definition, the social science is also directed to contribute to the social problem solutions from the social transformation results. (Wagner, et al. 1991). The purpose cannot be separated from the birth of the social science that is the development of the morality and politics philosophy directed to the more objective knowledge. (Porter 2003)

During the development, the character of the social science has gotten a lot of criticism. Social science is considered not able to give answers to social problems. Its theories are less applicable and the result is not comprehensive. In the policy levels, the problems appeared are like: the study that is delivered was not complex in terms that the study is trapped by one subject and certain theory, recommendation given is against to or not in line with the value from the policy makers, therefore; its recommendation is not used maximally. The other problem is related to the study result of the social science and the society's needs. Finally, the role of the social science in the application is considered to be failed by most scientists.

Those criticisms were responded with various opinions by the social scientists. Some social scientists had some arguments that the criticisms had purposes as social criticism by stimulating the debate in the politics process. On the other hand, the supporters had arguments that the social science had

purposes to solve socials problems. (Fisher 1998). However, the problems that often appeared are like inaccuracy in the problem analysis due to the less contextual knowledge and its history, the less comparative knowledge to see the same problem in the other countries, and due to the global influence towards a problem that makes the social science failed to give the answers on the existed social problems.

In general, during the social science development, those criticisms make the new thoughts born. At least there are three directions of the social science to handle those various criticisms. The first, on the level with the low abstraction, the social scientist demands that the contextual study is required to be deeper, the global and the historical comparative study to be more comprehensive. The second, the birth of the social science subject has more multi subjects or the social science should be related to each other. As an example, the policy science is the science which develops very well and gives the good responds towards those problems. Science that has multi disciplines has orientation on the problems, and values. The third, in the level of philosophy, the social science is demanded a change on the philosophy, ontology, epistemology and social science methodology as well.

Historical knowledge, comparative

Social science is not a common science. This is something that we have to understand, explaining and giving the solution on the social problems are very complex, and social science demands the learners and practitioners to have wide and deep insights. If they do not do like that, they cannot give great contribution to develop the science moreover the wide society. Narrow thoughts will only produce stupidity and shallowness in contributing the ideas and solution to the society.

At least, there are three important basic knowledges needed in trying to revitalize the social science. The first is historical knowledge or contextual knowledge. The knowledge has relationship with the historical insights including the social context in which the social scientists are there or where the study takes place. The social science indigenization that has become as a discourse since more or less the last three decades has a very close relationship with this knowledge. It means that social scientists need to understand and know the origin, the thought history, meaning, culture and many other various social sciences that become the contexts in which the scientists are there or they do the study. Besides that, the historical and contextual study of a theory to study a social problem includes in this knowledge. Therefore, the social scientists are able to understand the assumption and a context from a theory that will be used to study the social problems.

The second is the comparative knowledge. This knowledge has relationship with the knowledge about the similar social problem/phenomena that happens in the world. The purposes are not only to widen the insights towards the similar problems but also to become basic thought both in focusing on the problems, choosing the theory and etc. This knowledge gets more relevance in the global era. It is possible that the social problems in Indonesia are the implication from other country's problems or the global problems.

In Indonesia, the strategies done by the social scientists to take part in the national development activities are by joining the economists to do the social engineering and to decrease the science levels to practical and technical levels (Klenden 1987).

The social science in Indonesia that appeared for the first time in the 19th century oriented more on the applied matters or problem solving than on the science development. *Indologie* that becomes the name of science studied about social and cultural problems that were carried and taught by the colonial countries to the administrators and the practitioners (Kleden 1987).

Theoretical and Methodological Knowledge

Theoretical knowledge relates to the theoretical insights that will be used, will not be used, and the great theory underlying the birth of that theory. Methodology is understood in the narrow way as a method, philosophy is understood in a narrow way as a methodology. It is the main obstacle in the social science in Indonesia; the basic knowledge is not understood deeply.

Multidisciplinary social science philosophical abilities

Great scientists like Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Habermas are the great scientists who were busy thinking and debating the social science philosophically. If they talked about the policy in this context, a big paradigm would determine the direction of those scientists' thoughts. It was whether they would join the utilitarianism philosophy, libertarianism, postmodernism, or other paradigm. The writer puts the theoretical, comparative, and historical abilities because ideally it was gotten from the doctoral level.

Positivism aims to test theory. If there is reality that is almost the same as the assumption, this approach can be used. Interpretive paradigm aims to understand the social reality. The social theory is loose and more inductive. Critical character is more pro on certain condition with purpose to change the social reality. However, regardless that condition, the social science is important to give attention to the political philosophical study.

Conclusion

Based on those problems, at least there are three main important principles in the effort to revitalize the social science in Indonesia. The first, improving the historical, comparative and methodological knowledge; the second, the social science has multidisciplinary character or the social science has relation to each other; the third, the philosophical ability in studying the social problems. We do not use the social science indigenization way that only sees the social science from the contexts and the history.

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