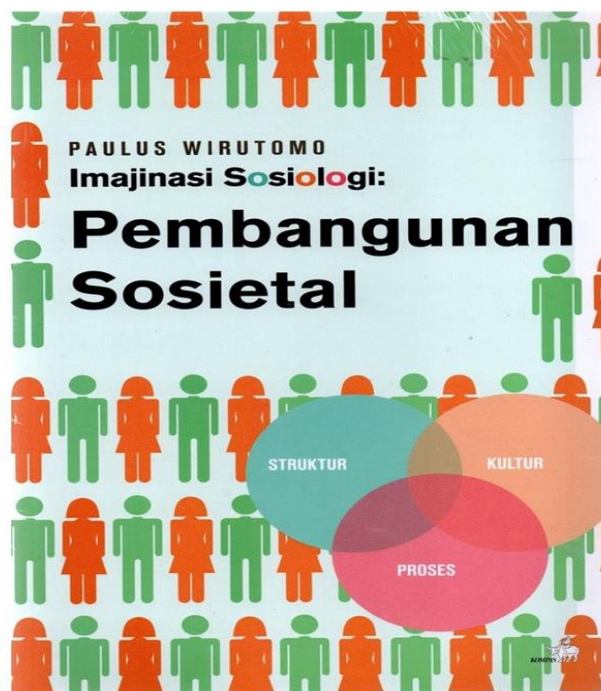


BOOK REVIEW:
CRITICAL NOTES ON *IMAJINASI SOSIOLOGI:*
PEMBANGUNAN SOSIETAL

Title : Imajinasi Sosiologi: Pembangunan Societal
Author : Paulus Wirutomo
Publisher : Kompas
Pages : + 494 hlm



Shortly after starting reading a book entitled *Imajinasi Sosiologi: Pembangunan Societal*, I imagined at least two things would be achieved. Firstly, a scientific inquiry into theoretical and applied approaches in the context of the development of sociology, and, secondly, a very thick reflection and contemplation contextualized into Indonesian experience. Optimistically, those two expectations spoiled during my reading process, giving notes on some parts, and even scribbling several typos and conceptual inconsistencies since I realize that this book is quite significant in

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terms of topic and a huge effort written by the author, a Professor Emeritus at University of Indonesia (UI).

It couldn't wait any longer to find out both: an effort to explore sociological theories—although they appear to be seemingly in a hurry and somehow 'full of tiredness'—as well as analytical and reflective endeavors which are quite dominant and gain a major portion in the book. The author likely wanted to put the second part as a dominant standpoint but it could be identified incomplete if it's not attached with conceptual inquiries and theoretical reviews as well. The attachment of theoretical investigations, on the one hand, can be comprehended as a discipline of scientific work which positions theory to be a guideline for the sake of analysis, and, on the other hand, it becomes a kind of ethic of research in a comprehensive notion, starting from building hypotheses, taking on researcher's positions, designing rigorous methodology, analyzing and reflecting on the results and findings to formulate new theoretical possibilities as a contribution to knowledge in the field. However, the discussion section and reflection are the most important parts both for academics in the field of social sciences and for Indonesian society in general.

The book has 11 chapters divided into systematic topics in each sub-title which is, in a substantial approach, categorized in three parts. Firstly, a review of sociological and social science theories in general; secondly, an exploration of theories and concepts of development studies which are the focus itself; and thirdly, a conceptual contribution in the context of Indonesia. If I were able to give an advice to the author, the second and the third part is the most essential to distinguish the position of the book particularly of contribution to Indonesian society. Those parts are the author's expertise itself who has mostly conducted research in the field of societal development and development studies. Fortunately, the third section is inserted in almost every chapter in

a form of analysis and reflection based on current data in Indonesia which strengthens a discussion of the author in contextualizing theoretical and conceptual contribution.

This essay is to review the book at least by two paths: firstly, concerning sociological theories, and, secondly, the author's discipline of implementing the theories based on the data and contextual basis of Indonesian society. I am concerned a lot about the theoretical problems of the book and how the author explained sociological theories since they are used as a tool to analyze current topics particularly of 'societal' development (with an apostrophe to indicate a new term for Indonesian society of either academic or popular usage). Even though the main focus is to criticize the problematic aspects of sociological theories, another concern is to broaden the discussion on wider concepts of social sciences and humanities mentioned and produced by the author.

Problems of Concepts and Theories

The explanation of sociological theories has intensively been in focus at the first part of the book which is likely set up to be an analyzing tool of societal development and, to a certain extent, community building. The theoretical reviews are persistently taken on the development studies that are quite rich and relevant to the book's main topic but the author cannot provide the recent debates particularly on theoretical investigation of the topic. Put simply, those theories are mentioned and explained for the sake of merely academic property without digging deeply into the wealth of academic sources. However, a good effort to compile the whole structure of the book is flawed when the author ignored some conceptual terms which are not provided with a rigorous reference and lacking data accuracy.

Structural-functional or *structural functionalism* is the first example to be simply noticed since it came up as the first

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sociological perspective in chapter three. My first glance didn't flick round the term since it's provided with adequate examples when mentioning some sociologists such as Auguste Comte, Harbert Spencer, Talcott Parsons, Kingsley Devis, and Robert K. Merton. While continuing reading the next chapter, I found some problems with conceptual terms and theories which turned me back toward a certain part explaining theories. Therefore, I needed to take plenty of notes and write some comments on the book. Structural functionalism is the first one to take into consideration when it's roughly linked to Comte, or, in the second inquiry, when the author explained symbolic interactionism by directly mentioning Max Weber and erasing some important sociologists to whom it's indebted. Hence, there is an absolute overlap.

Furthermore, mentioning structural-functional or structural functionalism (with two words in a phrase!) will be more acceptable if the author linked it first to American sociologists such as Talcott Parsons, Kingsley Devis, Wilbert E. More, Lewis A. Coser, etc. who were academically acknowledged as the leading sociologists developing it in their major works. In the explanation of a theory, the history of idea, term, concept and the intellectual antecedents in general has been clearly stated and written in many sources as a scientific recognition and gratitude as well. It's much to say that this book didn't employ the academic discipline comprehensively regarding concepts and theories by ignoring the primer sources usually guiding the academia to comprehend theoretical frameworks.

Some introduction books of sociological theories by George Ritzer and Jeffrey Stepnisky (Ritzer and Stepnisky 2018), Anthony Giddens (Giddens 2009), Paul Johnson (Johnson 2008), Bryan S. Turner (Turner 2006), Ruth A. Wallace dan Alison Wolf (Wallace and Wolf 1995), Jonattan H. Turner (Turner 1988), a variety of encyclopedia (Bruce and Yearley 2006), and dictionaries and

keywords of sociology have remarkably explained the sociological theories with historical backgrounds and the founders as well. They could simply be references in reading sociological theories and other sources related to social sciences. From those books mentioned earlier we will hardly find an explanation and sociologists' views on structural functionalism (in a phrase) which is rashly connected to Comte. However, there should be a long theoretical inquiry to trace and disclose before mentioning Comte or Spencer in the context of development of structural functionalism theory.

It's simply understood that academic ethics and disciplines had guided them to work professionally and full of carefulness. They have written several introductory books of sociological theory with very rich literature without a single statement mentioning structural functionalism is linked directly to Comte. They have of course followed the process of scientific investigation in very detailed and rigid ways in order to be able to contribute to the field. In Comte's *The Positive Philosophy Volume II* (Comte 2009c) and *The Positive Philosophy Volume III* (Comte 2000), which particularly explained the social aspects of development of modern society, or in *A General View of Positivism* (Comte 2009a), *Early Political Writings* (Comte 1998), *The Catechism of Positive Religion* (Comte 2009b), there are no a specific term like structural-functional or structural functionalism (in a phrase). Through the books, we could read how Comte analyzed and contemplated the problem of modern society and social life particularly from the aspects of its function. I argue, however, the term structuralist and functionalist in sociology are products of later sociologists' interpretation in reading Comte and Spencer. It's awfully acceptable in academic tradition to expand production of a theory.

Furthermore, a notion of function which was associated with *functionalism* could be found in Comte's explanation of individual

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function, intellectual function, functional aspects of society in general, or a humanity function toward social organisms basically reflecting biological naturalism. Functionalist thought, from Comte onwards, has looked particularly towards biology as the science providing the closest and most compatible model for social science. Biology has been taken to provide a guide to conceptualizing the structure and the functioning of social systems and to analyzing processes of evolution via mechanisms of adaptation (Giddens 1984). In this context, I accept a notion of *function*—generally used by Comte as a neutral word—added with *ism* and linked to himself. In addition, it's hard to deny that a father of functionalism is not Comte himself but Emile Durkheim who brought sociology to academic systematic research with scientific methods. To understand Comte's *function* or *functionalism*, we could read his argumentation and reflection through an essay titled *Moral attitude of the people. The workman should regard himself as a public functionary* in *A General View of Positivism*:

Workmen have only to imagine labour suppressed or even suspended in the trade to which they may belong, to see its importance to the whole fabric of modern society. Their general functions as a class, the function of forming public opinion, and of supporting the action of the spiritual power, it is of course less easy for them to understand at present (p. 204).

Comte's statement clearly pointed out the function of workmen as a social class having "a function of forming public opinion" in modern society. It implied a certain social system formed by the function of each structure and society. This method couldn't basically be separated with positivism itself which put function and structure as reciprocal in its nature to finally come into an organism of society. Due to his philosophical background postulating positivisms as a huge project of science, his view on

society and human liberty is determined by laws of natural necessity. In the following years, Durkheim criticized the way Comte and Spencer approached society as philosophical meditation rather than scientific work of sociology (Alexander 1982).

The discussion then concluded a very authoritative concept to be a generality in understanding the root and history of *functionalism* in sociology by proposing normative functionalism which is generated by Comte to Durkheim and to Parsons (Giddens 1979). Giddens distinguished functionalism and structuralism as two different concepts which are clearly put into consideration in developing a theory of structuration. Giddens' formula has been widely accepted in tracing the theoretical inquiry of functionalism which acknowledged Comte as *functionalist thought* (Giddens 1984). Generally speaking, Comte's legacy in sociology didn't attract American sociologists who developed in Chicago and in Harvard. Comte was seemingly ignored after World War II and rarely mentioned by enormous American sociologists such as Luhmann, Merton, and Parsons. They didn't provide Comte's legacy in their works although they have mostly been associated with (structural) functionalism. Put simply, talking about functionalism has automatically referred to Durkheim without passionately paying attention to Comte.

As the book explained structural-functional referring to Comte (p.35), I thought that the author was careless and mistaken in investigating theories and concepts in sociology. As mentioned earlier, structural-functional (in a phrase!) didn't directly come from Comte but it was developed particularly by Parsons and his colleagues in Harvard through the ways they intensively re-read Pareto and Durkheim's works. Moreover, the author is actually enough to cite a term of functionalism in spite of structural-functional to attribute it to Comte. But again, it's purely a problem

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of inconsistency in using an adequate theoretical term. At page 189, for instance, the author used a term of functionalism with sub-title *Perspective of Functionalism* in chapter VI: *Societal Development*. In this part, the author mentioned Spencer as a figure of *structural functional* (p. 36). Hence, there is overlapping investigation regarding theory and conceptual framework which has not been paid close attention generally in this book—and it happens to other sociological theories as well.

Meanwhile, the notion of structure, if it's in need of explanation, could be found in *The Positive Philosophy Volume II & III*. We will find a form and pattern of structure when Comte, in a specific way, wrote about *law of society, aspects of society, class of society, and religions* (mostly on Catholicism). Within the terms, social structure could be addressed implicitly. In *A General View of Positivism*, we are able to investigate it more explicitly, for example: *the structure of public and private worship, structure of the social organisms, the structure and growth of human societies, etc.* In order to make sure, however, I argue that Comte was used to write *social organism* rather than *social structure*. Hence, a term of (social) structure is not the main point in investigating Comte's legacies. Despite the notion of organism being interpreted as structure by some sociologists when examining Comte's works, both terms are not the same since they have epistemological consequences and implications: organism identical to biology and structure mostly associated with the field of social sciences and humanities. Giddens' works particularly investigating and explaining functionalism and structuralism (in separate term!) are *Central Problems in Social Theory* (1979) and *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (1984).

Further Negligence

Apart from structural-functional, there are some conceptual terms which are not provided with proportional references, consequently, I found myself lost among the messy concepts of which I am hardly able to trace the citation. For instance, the notion of *reward* and *normative expectation* are linked to Berger (p. 186) which ignited my inquiry for unveiling who Berger is in this context. Fortunately, the book has an indexical part at the end of it and I got the name Peter L. Berger. Meanwhile, in the bibliography I couldn't find any clue and citation to Berger either from primary source or from secondary one. This fact suddenly reminded me of some undergraduate students who are still newbies and lacking in almost every part of research methodology and writing discipline.

A lot of proofs of the author's negligence to be randomly able to mention here, for instance, are the discursive explanation of Manuel Castells (p. 63), Charles Tilly (p. 331), and even C. Wright Mills' theory which has been employed and reflected in every part of book. Even though set forth as a theory and shown on title as *sociological imagination*, Mills' works vanished from being either as primary sources or as secondary ones. I can't even find Mills' secondary sources which have generally been written and developed by other sociologists in reading his works. For me, the latter fact is a big surprise since it takes a fundamental role in the book. Apart from it, unfortunately, the author seemed to re-read theories (or copy-paste them?) from second sources and used them without carefully closely tracing back them. Despite having cited secondary sources, if the author truly did it, readers cannot find them in detail because there are no academic works discussing Mills' theory available in references.

Further negligence is related to a definition of a theory. Have a look at this sentence: "Menurut aliran symbolic interactionism, pemikiran konvensional sosiologis cenderung menganggap bahwa

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masyarakat manusia ditentukan oleh kekuatan yang terorganisasi dan mapan (According to symbolic interactionism, a common sociological understanding tends to assume that society is determined by organized and structured forces)" (p. 323). If the definition is the fixed one (not technically corrupted or typos), it is an absolute mistake in understanding symbolic interactionism. To be honest, I wasn't even surprised when reading further the notion of symbolic interaction and found out some distortions, for example, in the whole explanation of it, the author excluded the big names such as Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer who were convincingly acknowledged as two of its founders. The author jumped to Marx Weber (p. 55) by mentioning some Weber's ideas about verstehen and interpretative sociology. As one of the pioneers of interactionism with Georg Simmel, subsequently categorized as microsociology, I admit that Weber's legacies very much attracted and influenced the younger sociologists who mostly studied and thought in Chicago. However, while explaining a symbolic interactionism, Herbert Mead (1934) and Blumer are the first two figures to be recognized or should at least mentioned Blumer's book *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method* (Blumer 1969). If the author wanted to wisely broaden with more extensive sources, the second generation of Chicago School such as Erving Goffman, Howard S. Becker, and Richard Cloward are very fundamental in developing the theory.

In the following explanation, surprisingly, a definition of symbolic interactionism was corrected (see page 328). At this point, I am able to conclude that the book needs a proofreader and an editor to make it more precise and elegant. The inconsistency in concepts and theories is deeply regretted. Inconsistency at a certain level can be incompetent if it involves academic problems that require scientific rigor, prudence, and responsibility at the same time.

Another sociologist whose citation was ignored came from the author's circumstance at University of Indonesia itself like Selo Soemardjan. Even though mentioned four times and his ideas are referred, the bibliography of which books or articles are cited is not found clearly. The book's poor references and citation particularly when mentioning a concept and theory can be found in many parts of the book, for instance, on Harold Garfinkel (p. 219) and Muchtar Lubis (p. 293). These proofs, once again, might be considered as a piece of cake or by another alibi to hide the author's carelessness. However, when they happened to a professor producing an academic book, the failure should attract everybody's attention in order to bring the academic discipline and systematic method on the track. An academic book should reflect the whole process of scientific methodology to differ it from other works which are not in need to put systematic analysis, citation and reference rigorously. For ordinary readers, strict references may not get much attention, but for academics, such a rigorous method is a must to measure the conceptual and practical contribution which is intrinsically tied up with responsibility.

On that account, we should pay attention how Parsons intensively read Pareto, Durkheim, and Weber before formulating social system theory and functional-structural or structural functionalism (Parsons and Johnson 1975; Parsons 1949); Niklas Luhmann was well-considered and enthusiastic approval, at some points, of Parsons' works and expanded them by developing system theory and, at the same time, followed Durkheim and Weber; and Giddens ardently read Karl Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Schutz and Parsons as well to formulate the theory of structuration. In short, a huge effort to investigate the existing theories and concepts of how they are produced, developed and criticized in certain fields of study is an absolute necessity for academics before composing and proposing the theoretical development of their own. Such this

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obsession, frankly to say, is very much away from Indonesian academic existence by considering how the academic circumstances should work properly.

Structural, Cultural, and Processual (SCP)

The author eventually showed his expertise in many parts of discussion about societal development by presenting a series of examples in the context of Indonesia. This part is an incalculable contribution from the author to offer perspectives on development studies to bring about an ideal society in the making. In addition, the way the author provided many cases and examples based on contextual problems—taken from news, op-eds, analysis and the writer's reflection—in the form of separate charts with different colors, also sometimes equipped with photos, made the book quite impressive and easier for the reader to understand.

With regard to conceptual and theoretical accounts employed as an approach to explaining social structure, the author stuck in the same way. The discussion of so-called social structure didn't completely bring into a very detailed explanation. Several big names of classic sociologists who explored the social structure such as Karl Marx, Ferdinand Tönnies, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber didn't include as theoretical background before offering the author's other references on the topic. There are enormous concepts to use and cite. The basic understanding of social structure went astray without a fundamental position in which it should be posited. Meanwhile, the book broadened the interpretation of structure to power, for example by quoting Lord Acton: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely" (p, 217). However, the author tried to fulfill it by mentioning Marx and Dahrendorf, including Giddens with a larger portion. For me, to be honest, it is just like copy-paste with no

intention to postulate it as a tool of analysis, so consequently the author's product of knowledge doesn't have a fine foundation.

The author analyzed structure divided into at least three: physical structure, social structure, and regulatory structure. Physical structure is defined as man-made infrastructure such as air ports, railways, bridges, parks, etc., as well as natural infrastructure that is a potential for human and society development. Social structure is described by several elements such as vertical structure with the term social status and social differentiation (p. 222). The regulatory structure is related to government institutions (p. 224). Further, the structural analysis broadly included two major areas, namely *social setting* [?] and *structural instrument* [?] (p. 226). I put a question mark in the brackets to question the meaning, explanation, interpretation and conceptual reference of the author.

Structural development was identified by the author with an example of The Dutch Ethical Policy (Dutch: *Ethische Politiek*) designed by the Dutch in Nusantara. In doing so, the author elegantly explored the development aspects of structure by reaching out an imaginary exposure reflected through the policy that structural development carried out by Dutch in Nusantara people triggered cultural change in society in the following days which ignited social movements in forms of social revolutions such as National Awakening, The Youth Pledge, and finally The War of Independence (p. 228).

As happened in investigating concepts and theories of structure, the explanation of cultural things was not solidly built. The citation from Selo Soemardjan as I mentioned earlier is proof of how careless the author is. Accordingly, the cultural aspects of society and its various ways of building and developing community have been a fruitful debate among social scientists in every generation. In sociological context, society has the power to

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intertwine all aspects of social life with culture which take roles and positions in determining social life itself. Some sociologists with a pure interest in culture, to mention some, are Durkheim, Norbert Elias, Pierre Bourdieu, and the latest cultural sociology advocates such as Jeffrey C. Alexander, Alan Tomlinson, Mike Savage and so on. However, the author presented Durkheim and Marx in explaining structure and culture briefly and then mentioned Ritzer with a term of McDonaldization (p. 269) to broaden the cultural parts of rational and efficient work cultures. In general, societal development from a cultural aspect took a broad portion since the author offered analyzes and reflections based on the context of the latest Indonesian society like *mental revolution* (page 303). There is a lot of important data and information in this section which is able to be used as a reference in community development from a cultural aspect.

The final element of social process is called processual by the author who argued with a firm statement: "Many sociologists forget or ignore the aspect of processual." The term processual and social process is defined as individuals or groups which consciously negotiate by the process of meaning-making into social order that exists in society. If so, the opening sentence in the chapter (p. 319) is of course excessive and baseless allegations. As a newbie and even nobody in the academic circumstances, I have conducted some researches on the topic and some of articles have been published such as *Negotiating with Pandemic: Youth Adaptation to the Social Order of the Pandemic* (Sujibto and Diah 2022) and *"One Chemistry": The Social Process of the Yogyakarta Muhammadiyah Student Association* (Sujibto and Himmah 2022). These two articles discuss the social process of actors and their agency in relation to the larger social world. For such a claim made by the author, I do not need to find other academic works by prominent sociologists.

Apart from such a claim, a concept of processual in societal development should be appreciated because it is assumed by the author as every day's social interaction at several places such home and workplace, from individual participation in social network, club, association, and cooperation to bigger scale of activism in the society enabling the interaction of inter-community (p. 320). Based on the description and reflection by the author, it emphasized the optimistic role of societal development through dialogue and negotiation (p. 321). In this chapter, the author clearly explained and reflected on aspects of societal development with a processual approach.

An Offer to Analysis Model

In order to contextualize those three concepts, the author exercised them in a separate chapter titled Structural-Cultural-Procedural Analysis Model using the theory of sociological imagination by Mills (p. 352). The existence of this specific chapter is very interesting as an offer and a model of analysis directly guided by the author through several schemes compiled in the book. The author gave examples of analysis from his own papers, especially the research plans designed by the author and his team. The steps of the analysis model introduced by the author included an identification of problems, methods, results, analysis steps, and conclusions. More explanation of processual also took place in this section.

In addition, the author also provided several topics such as *National Integration* (p. 387), *Globalization: Between Benefits and Harms* (p. 413), and *CoronaVirus Outbreak: Structural-Cultural-Processual Analysis*. On each topic, the author explained about structural, cultural and processual analysis with very contextual cases which have been a reference for readers. This method was carried out by the author to impose the understanding of

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sociological imagination in a more flexible way. Although we cannot get the conceptual elaboration and discussion about a term of sociological imagination, the practical context offered by the author was unique enough to make this book not only a reading material, but it is very likely to be a guideline for community development with SCP approach.

In spite of entitling a term of *sociological imagination* to the book, the author ignored its theoretical background introduced by Mills. Thus, the presence of the concept looked like it was just borrowed as an accessory and a frame. In fact, the strength of the theory can actually be used in the lens of the SCP paradigm to elaborate on the level of conceptual framework, contextual data, discussion and analysis. However, the book is not densely packed, neglecting some important points particularly in its theoretical arsenal and concepts.

Finally, with its strengths and weaknesses, the book contributed to set forth important data with interesting analysis and reflection. This is a book with a thick size to be appreciated, as an academic work outside of academic duties like most sociologists cum lecturers who conduct research and write seriously to fulfill structural responsibilities. Through the book, Prof. Wirutomo has done his extraordinary devotion to the discipline of sociology.

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