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## The moral voice of urban society as presented within Save Street Child Surabaya

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### Abstrak

Kontestasi dalam ruang kota tidak dapat dihindari sehingga menciptakan dua kelompok; kelompok yang mengeliminasi dan tereliminasi. Anak jalanan menjadi aktor dalam wilayah kota yang kalah dalam kontestasi ruang, sehingga harus dieliminasi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menunjukkan perlunya semangat komunitarianisme dalam masyarakat kota yang penuh kontestasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus. Komunitas *Save Street Child* (SSC) Surabaya menjadi studi kasus dalam penelitian ini. Landasan teori yang digunakan adalah teori komunitarianisme dari Amitai Etzioni, yaitu tentang perlunya suara moral yang harus dibangkitkan dalam masyarakat modern, sehingga kehidupan yang mengikis nilai-nilai kebersamaan dapat dihidupkan kembali. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan cara observasi langsung dan wawancara dengan anggota SSC Surabaya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa suara moral komunitas SSC Surabaya berperan dalam mengurangi ketimpangan kehidupan anak jalanan. Mereka juga berkontribusi dalam meningkatkan softskill dan hardskill anak jalanan di Surabaya.

### Abstract

*Contestation in urban space cannot be avoided that creates two groups; groups which eliminating and eliminated. Street children become actors in the urban area who lose in the contestation of space, so they must be eliminated. This study aims to show that there is a need for a spirit of communitarianism in urban society that full of contestation. This research use qualitative method with case study approach. Save Street Child (SSC) Surabaya community become the case study of this research. The theoretical basis used in this study is Amitai Etzioni's theory of communitarianism, it is about the need for a moral voice to be awakened in modern society, so that life that erodes togetherness values can be revived. Data was collected by direct observation and interviews with members of SSC Surabaya. The results show that the moral voice of SSC Surabaya community has a role in reducing the inequality of street children's lives. They also contribute to improve soft skills and hard skills of street children in Surabaya.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Contestation of urban spaces becomes a hidden reality. This contestation occurs in almost all cities in the world, especially in the third world countries as developing countries (Basundoro, 2012). This happens because the attractiveness of the city, as an industrial center, is able to increase the urbanization of its surrounding rural areas. Job vacancies, better life expectancies, and complete various urban facilities are the reasons for rural communities to urbanize. Population growth makes urban spaces as an arena for the struggle for housing. This condition is called as transplosion (Evers, 1975), namely the invasion of one group to another territory group, causing conflict to land. The limitations of urban space will certainly create two opposing groups, the group that managed to get space, and the group that must be discarded. Unlucky groups will be thrown into urban corners such as riverbanks, train tracks, or crowded into other slum areas (Widyaningrum, 2009). Meanwhile, the winners will place elite areas that become icons of a city's progress. Thus, inequality will always accompany the modernization process that occurs in urban areas (Basri, 2008). The poor, street children, street vendors, and other marginalized groups are the losers of urban development.

In the midst of great contestation of the struggle for urban space between individuals or groups (government or private), they don't see the groups they alienate, that is, the sub-altern. The sub-altern group has first lost in this arena of contestation, so they are eliminated and not noticed. In fact, the exile led to the stigmatization of sub-altern as sub-human. They are considered as a group that reduces the beauty of the city, so they have to be hidden in the corners of the city (Jamaludin, 2017). This action is implemented in the program of eviction of settlements and the control of highways through the forcible arrest of street vendors, and the dismissal on informal sector actors as economic fields of marginal communities. In the book published by the Director General of Human Settlements (Komarudin, 1999), it explained that efforts to suppress the growth of the informal sector in urban areas is a noble task. In fact, the informal sector is economic sectors that is most able to survive in the midst of economic chaos. This is evidence that the development of the city corresponds to the declining morale of the community, because the aesthetics of the city is the main foundation in building urban communities. Finally, the city gave birth to such a distant dualism.

Urban dualism is the result of excessive democracy. Democracy, which was supposed to free people from the bonds of imperial domination, has now crossed the line into meritocracy which is also unequal (Madung, 2020). Urban society has focused on pursuing the materialism of the world; money, position, and popularity. Those who are not able to do so are the ones who should be eliminated. The spirit of individualism, liberalism, and capitalism make the city as an arena for the pursuit of achievement and freedom of expression. In the understanding of liberalism, independence means absolute individual freedom from interference from outside parties, including the community; ethnicity, religion and group, so the government needs to create laws to maintain these freedoms (Aida, 2005). Finally, modern society lives in its own world, becoming an isolated creature in a crowded society. Sandel (in Madung, 2020) calls this as an unencumbered self or a human without community. In fact, community is a network between individuals capable of jointly restraining their desires and preserving their freedom, since they are formed by common identities, norms and values. But unfortunately, urban society is identical with a liberal life of its inhabitants. Thus, despite being together in a crowd, they actually live individualistically.

This condition is unfortunate for the thinkers of the school of communitarianism. Communitarianism is a stream of social philosophy that appears as a form of intellectual dissatisfaction with liberal democracy in modern life. Modern liberalism has exceeded its limits. The concept of good living is considered to be in the private sphere, and laws were created to maintain this concept, so that individuals become legal persons in the public sphere. Finally, liberalism destroys solidarity as a result of individualization and atomization of social life (Madung, 2020). This is where the importance of a moral voice is born from the voice of the community. Moral voice is the encouragement of communitarian members to build a community life that includes all people. Moral voice becomes a solution in the midst of modern society that has been preoccupied with the life of the city world, so that they become atoms that do not know each other. According to Etzioni (1993), moral voice appears as an impulse that reflexively orders us to take moral action. This can only be done when humans are willing to disconnect for a moment from the entanglements of modern life, and create feelings of togetherness with community (Kurniawan, 2021).

Based on this explanation, the efforts of urban development should go hand in hand with the empowerment of their communities-urban communities. *Sustainable Cities and Communities* as one of the SDG's objectives should not only focus on the development of urban spaces and settlements, but also need to pay attention to the conditions of individuals who are members of their communities. The development of a city that leads to excessive individuality will create indifference to its community and space. This will negatively affect the sustainability of the collective community (society). Ogihara and Uchida (2014) said that the context of individualism in countries in Asia is different from that in America. Individualism in Asian societies is to remove the relationship with the group without building new values, while the individualism of European societies is built on shared values, so that even though they are free and disconnected, they remain morally connected to each other.

Surabaya is an urban space that has been an arena of contestation for years. However, the problems of the marginalized group still accompany in the city of Surabaya. In Basundoro's (2012) research, the struggle for Surabaya city space in 1900-1960 was the result of the relationship between poor people and the state which formed a binary opposition in accessing city space. Nihayah and Legowo (2016) shows that economic problems, as a result of the defeat of urban space contestation, are a factor in street children in the city of Surabaya. The oppressive inequality in Surabaya's urban space indicates that liberalism that upholds individualist values has exceeded its limits. According to Etzioni (1993), urban society needs to pull back the pendulum of freedom and restore its communitarian values.

The Save Street Child Surabaya (SSC Surabaya) community is one of communities that seeks to pull back the pendulum of excessive individualism. In the midst of the current competition of modern society, they always accompany and empower the marginal communities in Surabaya, especially street children. This is in line with Etzioni's efforts to voice the morals of urban society, which has been ensnared by high I-ness. Therefore, SSC Surabaya is interesting to be studied based on the view of Amitai Etzioni's communitarianism, because they represent the moral voice of urban people who are dissatisfied with city life.

Several studies have attempted to shed light on the Save Street Child community. First, Nisa & Yoenanto (2023) with the title "the role of the Save Street Child community in increasing the learning motivation of Surabaya Street children" show that the SSC Surabaya community plays a very important role as a companion for street children and helps in increasing their learning motivation. Then, Afrita & Wahyudi (2024) with the title "Save Street Child community communication strategy in empowering street children in Surabaya" show that the SSC Surabaya community has succeeded in implementing empowerment

strategies in enabling and empowering aspects. Finally, Musthafa's (2018) research entitled "Empowerment of street children: a case study in the Save Street Child Malang community" shows that SSC Malang applies community-based empowerment. This form of empowerment is a model of empowerment that emphasizes the functions of the family and the potential of the entire community. Previous studies have not attempted to read the phenomenon of social community in urban areas through the lens of Etzioni's communitarianism, especially SSC community in Indonesia. Therefore, this study seeks to reveal how SSC community in Surabaya is a form of the spirit of communitarianism that has been described by Etzioni. The purpose of this study is to understand more about the SSC Surabaya community. Thus, this understanding will help researchers to analyze SSC Surabaya using Etzioni's theory of communitarianism.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

This research uses qualitative methods, namely methods that attempt to analyze and interpret interview results so that a phenomenon can be described (Auerbach & Silverstein in Sugiyono, 2020). The approach used in this study is a case study approach. Case study approach is used to reveal a phenomenon in a particular case. In this study, SSC Surabaya community became a case study that will be explored by researchers.

This study uses two forms or types of data sources as material for analysis. First, the primary data, namely data obtained by researchers through the interview process with members of SSC Surabaya. Observation of participants was also conducted by researchers to support the data of this study. Researchers observed partisan during SSC Surabaya activities with street children in the city of Surabaya. This is an effort to find out directly the activities and interactions carried out by the SSC Surabaya community. Second is secondary data, namely data which obtained by researchers through literature studies in accordance with the theme of the researcher. Secondary data assist researchers in analyzing and describing the results of research.

## **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The definition of "urban" is more directed to the characteristics of life and character of people in the city. This definition is the opposite of rural community. Urban society has the characteristics of members who are separated, not know each other, heterogeneous, relations between people are very straightforward, broken from traditional ties, and the social mobility is not closed. (Jamaludin, 2017). Many people give different terms to the condition of urban society. Durkheim (in Ritzer, 2010) defines urban society based on the social ties that unite them. According to him, heterogeneous societies have bonds of organic solidarity, they are united by the differences they have, so that each element must have a function in the life of society. Meanwhile, in Tonnie's language (in Soekanto & Sulistyowati, 2015) a society that has these characteristics is called as *gesellschaft*. This designation as the opposite of *gemeinschaft* indicates the characteristics of rural communities.

The meaning of cities and villages should not be a standard meaning. Unfortunately, according to Pratama (2022), the meaning of cities and villages in Indonesia has been politicized through the standard of Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI) by the government. The city in KBBI has three meanings; namely a residential area consisting of house buildings that are a unity of residence from various layers of society; a population concentration area with high density and modern facilities and most of the residents are not farmers; and a wall that surrounds the place of defense'. This meaning, according to Pratama (2022), categorizes cities as developed, dense, and modern areas. In fact, this does not correspond to what is happening. The word is just a tool of subjection to the language regime in order to create the illusion of an urban area. The urban illusion keeps an open secret, it nourishes poverty, simultaneously hiding it. In fact, the city has always been identified with

symbols of progress and prosperity. We can easily find tall buildings, luxury cars and parks, but we can also easily find crowded houses, homeless people and slum areas in urban areas (Jamaludin, 2017). Urban people are aware of this inequality, but they are haunted by the goals they have to achieve, so they don't have time to turn to the marginalized. Finally, urban marginalized communities are in a confusing ambivalent situation. They have separated from their original culture, but have not been able to access the culture of urban society (Basri, 2008). The dream of a better urban life leads them to a life of intense competition. They are trapped in an individualistic and meritocratic city life.

Surabaya as a reference of developed city in East Java also can not be separated from inequality. While the Surabaya UMK (city minimum wage) exceeding four million, there are groups of people who have to survive without having a fixed income and a clear place to live. Sugiharto (2019) concluded that the community groups living in the Rangkah Tomb in Surabaya are groups who do not have permanent jobs, or work with low income such as scavengers, online drivers, monkey masks, and brokers. Nisyak et al. (2023) research on the gap in urban society behind urban development shows the reality of inequality between upper and lower strata of society in Surabaya. Land tenure by investors in Wiyung Sub-District of Surabaya makes the lower strata of society have concerns about being removed from their place of residence someday. Then, Handayani & Handoyo (2023) highlight community survival strategies in slum villages in Surabaya. Handayani & Handoyo (2023) concluded that people in slums area in Surabaya work potluck even though their income is not too large. This is due to their low level of education.

In addition to the groups mentioned, street children are also the most vulnerable group in urban life. As a group that still needs guidance, street children are often a group that is eliminated from urban life. Rahayu (2024) research on the educational conditions of street children in Surabaya concluded that they have a higher chance of dropping out of school compared to children who have family support. According to her, family support, acceptance of the school environment, environmental influences, father figures, and economic problems are factors that affect their education. Putri (2022) also concluded the same findings. According to her, street children in Surabaya are very vulnerable to exploitation, such as forced work, forced wage taking, and intimidation from parents or thugs who control the area. Based on sources collected through the Surabaya Statistical Data Center, the latest data regarding the number of abandoned children in Surabaya is data on 2017, namely there are 6,349 abandoned children. Meanwhile, data for the following years cannot be accessed. This shows that marginalized groups in Surabaya are indeed groups that must be hidden. Because their presence is considered a bad image for the city. Through a Radio Sura Surabaya broadcast (Indah, 2024), Mrs. Anna Fajriatin, Head of the Surabaya City Social Service, explained that the number of street children in Surabaya has tended to increase over the past three years. In 2022, there were 148 street children placed in the Social Center Environment (LIPONSOS) Surabaya). In 2023, the number fell to 134. Then, in 2024 it rose again to 167 street children. In the aspect of education, street children are difficult to receive formal education. On average, the factor that makes them drop out of school is the economic factor. This is not in line with the high quality of education of the people of Surabaya. Street children who still in school age are required to meet the economic needs of the family. The income of parents who are poorly educated cannot compete in the midst of city life full of competition, eventually it becomes a problem environment. Research conducted by SMERU (Diningrat, 2019) shows that children from poor families will remain poor for the next generation, because their level of education is unable to finance the education process of the next generation. This is in line with the life of liberalism that leads to meritocracy.

### SSC Surabaya: Articulating Communitarian Morals

Save Street Child or SSC is a non-profit community that focuses on empowering marginalized groups in urban areas, especially street children. This community was established in 2011 and has conducted various programs involving street children in various urban areas in Indonesia. Surabaya, as the second largest city in Indonesia, cannot be separated from the problems of street children. This is the reason why SSC grows in Surabaya. Quoted from ayorek.org, SSC Surabaya “started from a simple idea to actualize concern into action, and not complicated ... without going through bureaucracy and manipulation of the initial spirit of struggle”. The research of Baihaqi et al. (2017)) has previously stated that SSC Surabaya departs from the spirit of caring for young people in the city of Surabaya to the marginalized in Surabaya as the basis for its formation. Setiyowati & Harmanto (2022) also showed the same findings. SSC Surabaya is mostly volunteers from senior high school students or university students who are interested and have concerns about the lives of street children. Based on an interview conducted to one of the members of SSC Surabaya, the alienation of street children became one of their ways to accompany street children. SSC Surabaya seeks to erase the alienation of street children in the midst of harsh city life. Therefore, cities with limited facilities require marginal communities to continue to maintain their existence (Bawole, 2009). Moral voice awakens a sense of SSC Surabaya solidarity in the midst of individualist urban life.



Figure 1. Save Street Child Surabaya program which implemented with other communities

Source: source of personal data

SSC Surabaya community conducts routine activities every Friday, at 19.00 – 21.00 and Sunday morning, at 08.00-finish. Meetings are conducted in different places and locations. Thus, street children in every region have the same opportunity to meet SSC Surabaya community. The weekly meeting is usually filled with learning together to increase the ability to read, write, and count for street children. Nisa & Yoenanto’s (2023) research concluded that street children in Surabaya have low learning motivation. This is due to environmental factors that do not favor them to develop. Based on the research of Setiyowati & Harmanto (2022), SSC Surabaya community also socializes the values of character education for street children. The character education is about the understanding of religiosity and tolerance in life. In addition, this educational process involves not only street children, but also parents. When the researchers observed to location, there were some parents of street children who accompanied their children. This shows the moral warmth brought by SSC Surabaya community members in empowerment. So, the approach is not

only to street children, but also the support of their parents. Other supports also often comes from other communities in Surabaya. When researcher made observations, there was another community that enliven the activities of SSC Surabaya. After the core activities, the community provides financial assistance to street children and parents. One of the informants from SSC Surabaya also said that many other communities participated in various SSC Surabaya activities. This means that the moral voice of SSC Surabaya community also invites moral voices from other communities.

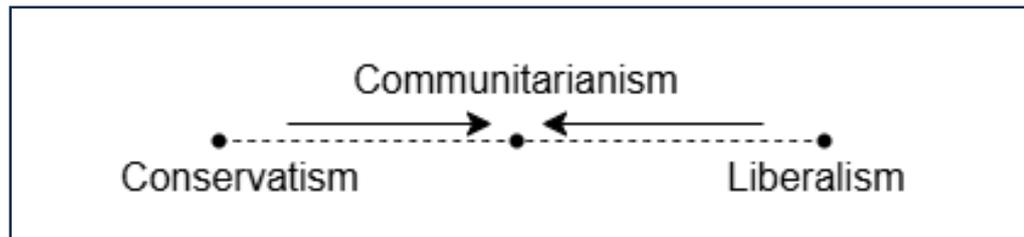
In addition to educational programs, SSC Surabaya also has other programs as an effort to empower street children in Surabaya. First, the Education Scholarship Program. This Program is held by the SSC Surabaya community to break the financial constraints that limit street children from accessing formal schools. Second, The Healthy Friday Program. This Program is to support the nutritional balance for street children. Third, the skills development program of street children. This Program is to train or introduce skills for street children, such as photography and computer classes.

### **Etzioni's Frame of Communitarianism**

Excessive individualism is an essential problem in the life of urban people. Because as a center of urbanization, the city has become the most fertile place for the growth of capitalism, liberalism, and of course individualism (Munck, 2016). This makes individuals create relationships not based on affection, but based on transactions (Ritzer & Goodman, 2009). Individualistic societies have a higher tendency for opportunistic transactions in intra-group life (Chen et al., 2002). Profit is the main emphasis in building relationships between people, if you do not get personal benefits, then this is considered as wasting time. This condition destroys the values of community solidarity. The solidarity of the group that had previously been so binding on its members had been eroded by the spirit of liberalism, leading it to social indifference. The communitarian moral voice is an attempt to restore the pendulum.

Etzioni explains that in communitarianism, people must let go of their *I-ness* and establish their *we-ness*, the spirit of community. The spirit of community can be awakened through the collective consciousness of individuals; they must take time to reflect on life together. This moral voice arises on the impulse to carry out moral actions. Fundamentally, Etzioni (in Dixon et al., 2005) builds on this explanation by arguing that individuals have an obligation to meet each other's needs. Etzioni (1993) likens it to a mother's reflex movement when she hears her baby crying, without needing a consultation, the mother already knows what she must do. This is the moral voice that must be awakened, it comes as a self-demand to perform moral actions.

Etzioni said that the communitarian movement helps social stability between generations and maintains social order (Prideaux, 2002). Communitarianism is intended to achieve a balance between liberalism and conservatism, namely autonomy and command (Kwan, 2014). According to Etzioni (Kurniawan, 2021), a government that is too totalitarian (conservative) will suppress the "moral voice", while a government that is too loose (liberalism) will diminish the "moral voice.". Therefore, communitarianism does not seek to bring modern society back to a conservative life, but to balance the two. Etzioni explained that communitarianism will not push the pendulum of extreme liberalism back towards extreme conservatism, but communitarianism will lead society to a relationship of personal freedom, freedom of expression, and commitment to community; namely their rights and obligations as members of the group (Etzioni, 1993). Therefore, a moral voice is needed that is able to encourage the attitude of communitarianism of society.



**Figure 2. Direction of Communitarianism**

Source: source of personal data

In his book, Etzioni (1998) explains that the communitarian moral voice can be strengthened through various institutions, namely family, education and community. SSC Surabaya's efforts to improve the quality of education for street children is one of example to improve the morals voice of communitarian. Street children, as one of sub-altern groups in Surabaya, are a group that is marginalized from the harsh city life. They became the crux of the spirit of capitalism, liberalism, and the excessive individualism of urban society. Through the strength of its community, SSC Surabaya was able to restore the frozen and rigid moral spirit. They are trying to re-birth the morals of their own society. To quote Durkheim (in Ritzer, 2010), because society is the source of morality, it must have the ability to generate moral demands, and this movement must be born from the actual life of society. According to Etzioni (1996), maintaining and instilling communitarian morals lies in normative matters such as moral dialogue in education.

In addition to being a moral education space for street children, SSC Surabaya as a community also plays a role in fostering the moral voice of other individuals. Research conducted by (Merawati & Jacky (2015) showed that SSC Surabaya activities were able to attract volunteers to take part in helping marginalized groups in Surabaya. Etzioni (in Kurniawan, 2021) explain that moral voice can only happen if the individual in the community is able to take the time to stop and think for a moment from the busy routine of the city, while reflecting back on their involvement in society (the sense of belonging). Individuals involved in the SSC Surabaya community are one proof of this moral voice. Surabaya, as a big city, is full of meaningless activities. People live in large communities but are unable to reflect on their acceptance in those communities. The SSC community is a handful of individuals who managed to take a break from city life. Etzioni also explained that the ideal concept of the communitarian model of a society is the establishment of a balance of three social institutions. This institution is called by Etzioni as "the third way", namely state as a political institution that regulates formal policies, market as an economic institution that ensures the equitable distribution of resources, and community as a social institution as a space for the formation of a moral voice.

Based on the Indonesian Central Statistics Agency 2024, the East Java Democracy Index is the second-best position out of 38 provinces in Indonesia, namely 81.31 points. Surabaya as the capital city certainly has an important role in maintaining political balance in East Java. Human Development Index in Surabaya is also the highest in East Java, which is 84.69. The real expenditure per capita as an indicator of the standard of living (economy) is the highest in East Java, which is 19.66 million per year. The Local Own-source Revenue (PAD) of Surabaya also far exceeds the PAD of other cities/districts in East Java, namely 7.5 trillion rupiah. These data show that political and economic institutions are running in balance in Surabaya. However, the social problems that occurred in Surabaya showed the underdevelopment of the community as a social institution in the community. The balance of politic and economic system in one region may be called a developed region. However, if the society in the life of the community is sick, the capital to build relationships between

individuals in the community will be weak. The existence of SSC Surabaya community does not mean to show the balance of social institutions in Surabaya, but as evidence of weakness. SSC Surabaya community helps to provoke moral voices; in other languages it is still the embryo of a strong social institution in Surabaya.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Contestation continues to lead the development of urban communities, so that the dualism between winners and losers will continue to exist. This is due to the spirit of meritocracy of urban society because of excessive liberalism. Surabaya as one of the largest cities in Indonesia cannot be separated from this problem. Surabaya is also awoken by competition. Street children became one of the victims of this competition. Therefore, the reanimation of moral voice through community spirit is necessary to create a balance life of urban society. SSC Surabaya as a volunteer community is an effort to revive the spirit of community in the midst of modern society. Using the analysis of Etzioni communitarianism theory, SSC Surabaya is able to become a moral voice and create an embryo of community spirit in the midst of city life. That way, in addition to political and social institutions, social institutions in the city of Surabaya can grow to become a developed city.

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