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A CULTURAL REALM OF CONTROL: A STUDY OF CONTROL PRACTICES IN AN INDONESIAN LISTED COMPANY

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports a field study on the relationship between control practices and its organisational context. It will provide an understanding on how control including budgeting is practiced within a specific context of the cultures of an organisation. Evidence brought into this ethnography is grounded in the everyday functioning of control. Therefore, this study is about organisational control as it focuses on the organisation members' responses and actions related to control practices. The observation has been directed toward actions of the members beyond the management discretion. As this study identifies several elements of control practices that exhibit the members' shared of meanings, it focuses on the cultural significance of day-to-day control activities.

Keywords: ethnography, organisational control, management accounting, culture

INTRODUCTION

Interpretive accounting research have endorsed that the relationship between control practices and its circumstances within an organisation is not simply linear as it has been techno-centrically understood (Ahrens and Mollano, 2007). The practices of control work and affect the organisational functioning in diverse ways as people in each organisation has their own symbolic realm of organising. At stake, in the conception of accounting practices is that there is interplay between control and the symbolic systems of an organisation. Even though, this interpretive research has provided understanding on how accounting is being practiced within a specific context of the cultures of an organisation, more evidence grounded in the everyday functioning of accounting including in its specific context of cultural realm, is still on call. According to Ahrens and Mollano (2007), with the notable exception of Dent (1991) accounting field studies have rarely drawn on concepts of culture.

In this paper, I extend that path of research by presenting a field work that is grounded in observation. It addresses actions in the symbolic realm of organising taken place in a company. Therefore, organisational practices have been understood through discourses as well activities. This study is about organisational control as it focuses on the organisation

members' responses and actions related to control practices. The observation has been directed toward actions of the members beyond the management discretion. As it identifies several elements of control practices that exhibit the members' shared of meanings, this study focuses on the cultural significance of day-to-day control activities.

In the rest of this paper, I will briefly describe the conception of Clifford Geertz's interpretive culture that provides methodological frame for this study. This will be followed by describing the organisational culture of the Company where the field research is taken place.[1] I will then present a description of control practices in the plants of the Company. A discussion session then will follow.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Geertz's Interpretive Culture

In this study, culture will be understood by following Geertz's interpretive culture. In his seminal collection of essays, The interpretation of Cultures (1973), Geertz defines culture as an ordered system of meanings and symbols ("interworked systems of construable signs") in terms of which social interaction takes place (pp. 12, 144). Since culture is a symbolic gesture, according to Geertz, its meanings is created and maintained in the course of social interaction. Thus culture relates to social action. To Geertz, culture is constituted in an interaction in a social network by manipulation of common and communicable symbol systems within different human groups (see also Goodenouogh, 1974, p. 435).

Consequently, to understand culture means to search for meaning within interaction stated above. In search for meaning, Geertz maintains that the task of anthropologists is to describe not just the grammar or structure but the rhetoric of life, not just the rules of the game but the many, often confliction, purposes people hope to realise by playing the game and strategies and tactics, by which they try to realise them. However, how can an understanding of alien phenomena (ie. society life) be reached? The answer lies in what the literature of anthropology calls as ethnography.

Geertz refused to define ethnography in terms of techniques such as establishing rapport, transcribing text, taking genealogies, mapping fields, keeping a diary that researchers may follow.

> But it is not these things, techniques and received procedures that define the enterprise. What defines it is the kind of intellectual effort it is: an elaborate venture in, to borrow a notion from Gilbert Ryle, "thick description (Geertz, 1973, p. 6).

With "thick description," an ethnographer is able to appreciate the rhetoric of individual actors in various manipulations (Goodenough, 1974, p. 435). It is important to note here that what an ethnographer has to understand in providing thick description is meanings: "the meaning of the speech event, not the event as event" (Geertz, 1973a, p. 19). Here, Geertz wants to contrast the thick qualities of interpretive theory with the worn qualities of a mechanistic, reductionist social science (Shankman, 1984, p. 263).

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1   A full account of the company organisational culture is already presented in JRAI (Rasyid, 1998).

In providing thick description one needs to go to native as "our formulations of other people's symbol systems must be actor oriented" (Geertz, 1973, p.14). However, Geertz does not believe that "going native" involves becoming a native or mimicking them (native), or even re-experiencing. For Geertz, understanding native does not result from re-experiencing, but from the ability to construe their modes of expression. To be able to inscribe social discourse sensitively and imaginatively, an ethnographer needs to really listen and see. "We must go to cling to the injunction to see things from the native's point of view" (Geertz, 1983, p.58). Thus, credibility of an ethnography rests on it ability to convey important meanings in the lives of a group of the actors' symbolic systems by showing how they play out in practices (Ahrens & Mollona, 2007).

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
The Company and Its Culture[2]

The field of this study is a company established in 1973 to pioneer bottling water industry in Indonesia. The Company's products are considered as "state of the art" as well as "quality standard setter" in the industry. After four years struggling to create market, the Company's products proved tremendously successful. The increasing profits provided financial foundation for growth. Having steadily grown and become more profitable, the Company in 1990 successfully listed on Indonesian Stock Exchange (formerly Jakarta Stock Exchange).

When we search for symbolic systems within the Company, one will have it lying in the notion of quality. This notion is the most cited word, in its "production meeting", "sales meeting", advertising, and the Company News or even at the office rooms. At the Company, "quality" is not implanted, but constructed through social and organisational interaction within the Company, and in any way is not counter posed to quantity (cf. Hofstede, 1984, 1991). For the Company actors quality is something while quantity is something else. From its earlier time, the founders, lead by Mr.Air, have committed to produce "clean" water that would not make people sick.

Through his social and organisational interaction with the Company members, Mr. Air has made the notion of "quality" meaningful. Mr.Air gives vision to the notion. To him quality is not just a matter of producing "sterile" water, but it is a concrete embodiment of ideas, serving as tangible formulation of *the model of* organisational reality and *model for* organisationing the reality (Geertz, 1973). In another word, quality is culture.

Mr. Air started to invent meaning upon the notion of quality by imposing his own understanding of what is healthy water and how to produce it. Mr. Air said:

> Producing good water looks easy work, but to achieve that we have been dealing with such problems as people, machines, technology, and customers.
> We have to teach our people how good manufacturing conducts should be. We have to find good technology in order to produce good water. Then we have to teach our customers what good water is.

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2   A fully inscription on the culture of the Company could be found in Rasyid (1998).

Although Mr. Air was the President Director[3], there were many stories of how he spent his time coming on to the floor. In his sudden visits to plants, laboratories, or warehouses, Mr. Air's attention ranged from checking the cleanness of the workers nails up to checking the machines. For Mr. Air, doing such close supervision was "teaching": to teach the workers on how "good manufacturing practice" should be done. As a teacher, Mr. Air was considered as "a good teacher" by the insiders for never condemning his workers. When he found a plant worker working with dirty nails, he warned the direct supervisor of the worker. The cleanness of the surrounding areas of the plants was also part of Mr. Air's concern. In this way, the production people would understand what good water was and how to produce that. Then, the head of the plant would know what he/she had to do.

In the Company, the process of construction of the notion of quality is also the process of organising. Although the notion would not be found in any formal document, except in the advertising materials, it was and is a guide for organisational activities, an image by which to grasp it, a standard by which to judge it. Thus, quality is *a model of* (Geertz 1973).

The case of Mr.Air's sudden visits and that of Mr.Air's selection of who would be invited in to the coordination meeting, provide an illustration of how Mr.Air made quality a model *of* the organisational reality. Just like to show how an engine works, engineers prepare a flowchart.

Indeed, the enactment of the meaning system of quality should not be awarded only to Mr.Air. It is true that the position of Mr.Air as the owner lends him a special advantage in developing such value systems and codes of behaviour. Rather, the system of meaning had been developed thorough a course of social interaction within the organisation. Ratih (a former quality control supervisor who was at the time of this field work the expert staff of quality audit) told me that

> At that time [the time she started working in the company] I was not given some sort of job description from which I might know what my responsibilities were. However, by what Mr.Air gave his attention to I then knew what I had to do.

The same thing was also told by Martondang, the manager of one of the plants. He recalled his experience when he was a production supervisor in the factory:

> At that time there were no pre-designed forms which could tell me what production data I must record. I designed such forms by my self based on what information I though Mr.Air might need in order to asses how the production was going on.

Here, quality was a model from which the Company members could organise their task-related activities. Thus, quality is a "model *for*". Therefore, quality is both a model of what to do, and model for the doing of it (Geertz, 1993a). In the Company, we can see quality as a cultural pattern has an intrinsic double aspect: give meaning to the organisational reality both by shaping itself to the reality and by shaping the reality to it self (see Geertz, 1993a, p. 93).

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3 At earlier time of the Company until 1989 when it went to public, listed in Jakarta Stock Exchange.

The social construction process of quality culture carries a message that at the centre of its construction is Mr.Air. He is a governing elite, who externalises his own ideas of how the Company people should govern the organising process into the social world of the Company (see Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

How could Mr.Air's subjectivity become meaningful to the people? Mr.Air is the owner, and all the Company people know about that. It is understandable that the vision of the owner will greatly influence the life of the Company. However, the tremendous growth of the Company gives rise to the people's respect for him.

We have seen how the meaning systems of quality has been constructed and re-constructed. The issue of how a cultural reality is constructed and how such a construction shapes organisational action are of fundamental interest in the studies of organisational cultures (eg. Alvesson and Berg, 1992; Schein, 1992; Ott, 1989).

In the case of the Company, systematic actions which have been persuaded in order to transform the idea to produce quality water into a symbolic system of meaning were instituted by Mr. Air. Through Mr. Air "quality" then has become an interpretive scheme.

In the Company, a system of meaning embodied in the symbols of quality is also a tangible formulation of "a world view". The price competition in the market is viewed in ac-cordance with the beliefs in quality and customer satisfaction. Competitors are not seen as "competitors," but as a tool for control; "we need such competitors, because by their exist-ence we will know how ours is." The intention of the competitors to lower their price is not seen as an offence that has to be countered. It is also not seen as a clue that the competitors might be more efficient. However, it is seen as a self justification that their products and their services are low in quality. So in the situation of price war, the Company "keeps the system going on."

The foregoing understanding brings a strong message that in the Company, the quality culture provides contexts for production and sales people. Accounting was left behind in the organisational discourse. The language used in everyday life was nothing to do with account-ing. There is no accounting notion emerged from the organisational discourses which than becomes a part of the clusters of significant symbols. Communication was based on such words of "quality", "target", "clean", "good manufacturing practices" as well as "customer satisfaction." To the accounting members, those words were not of importance as their significance centred on production and selling. For the accounting manager, his work is to prepare formal and standardised annual financial statements which for him have no reference to that system of meaning.

Control practices

The Company bottles natural mountain water in its plants. I have done an intensive observations and interviews in the plants of B and C. According to the people there, Mr.Air do not rare visit the plants: his appearance is not just a visit but a 'teaching' of how to do that, how to do this in almost all aspects of the work life of the plants. Mr.Air's sitting-together with the Company's members is not just a meeting but a 'briefing' of how to behave, while his outing-with-the members is not just a picnic but a 'listening' to what is going on in the ground.

This is a way for Mr.Air to give form and direction to the life of the plants and then to make sure that what has been going on is in the right path. This is what control is for Mr.Air.

Checking the cleanness of the workers' nails, cloth, and hair and making sure whether samples have been taken regularly for laboratory examination are sorts of things Mr.Air do to invent meaning for the word of 'quality'. Mr.Wandy, the first manager at the B plant, recalls that "at the earlier time, nobody knew for sure how the production should be run, but we knew what were going to achieve."

Having paid attention even to details is something that production people know about Mr.Air. Basri a marketing manager also spoke to me that "he pays attention to everything, even to a small thing". For the Company members, especially its managers, 'attention even to a small thing' is not only a work context but an objective of their work lives.[4] As to the latter, the words of Wandy tell its essence:

> Actually what we want to do with that [to know even a little thing] is that everyone should be fully dedicated to their work. Otherwise, this company will have managers who do not care of the daily operation of the Company, just will be being …..'take it easy' ….. We do not want to be like other big companies with their managers running other business, getting extra income.

In a more specific way I should say that for the managers of the Company "paying attention even to a little thing" shapes their behaviour, while at the same time it is a vehicle through which they influence the behaviour of others.

It is within such above situation that control systems emerge within the Company. The pattern of social interaction within the control system is moulded by that circumstance. Like at an Area of the National Coal Board, the continuous concern of the plant managers is to construct a 'mental picture' of what is 'really' happening on the ground through multiple ways of getting information (Capps et al., 1989). Therefore, being an operational manager is not being a good 'officer', but a good 'field worker'. It is taboo for the production manager of a plant to stay in their office rooms, as they are supposed to be on the floors.

Fully dedicated to the work within the Company is to be started from 'knowing nothing how to do the work.'

> When I was a production supervisors in this [Bekasi] plant [that is 1983], there was no administrative system. Then, I tried to design forms that I thought would be useful. My guideline was I wanted to know what the results I had achieved, so that my boss will also know what I had done. Until now [he is now the manager of the plant], we still use such forms, indeed with some improvements. More than that, we had no job description. We made it by ourselves.

These words come from Maratu. He is a production professional started working as a production supervisor, then a production manager prior to the appointment as a plant manager.

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4   This is actually the view of Geertz (1993a) that culture performs as a context. The application of this in an organisational cultural research appears also in Kunda (1992).

Ratih, the first professional laboratorist the Company hired, a former quality control manager of the Bekasi plant who at the time of this field work was the expert staff for quality standards, recalled her experience as the quality control manager.

> At that time, I did not know what I had to do. What I knew was I was a quality control manager, and the only description I got from Wandy was 'to control the quality, so that no bad product would go out'. However, day by day I was becoming aware of what I should be doing. For me, as with what Wandy and or Mr.Air pay attention to, the cleanness of the plant area, was my responsibility.

Surprisingly, that there was no systematic control system is true not only for production units, but also for others, as I was told by Nurdin, the head of the personnel development. When he joined the Company, there were plenty of jobs that had no job description. The first thing he did at that time was to develop a so called "manual of the organisations system". However, for this valuable effort, Nurdin has never had supports from the top management. In an interview addressing this issue, Wandy said that:

> They [the company members] were told of their job and responsibility globally. By passing the time they would know the details.

Furthermore, Wandy gave a reason for this situation

> "This company started from nothing, but grew up too fast so that those sorts of things were forgotten."

The foregoing account imparts a story of the social construction of control system at the Company. It is presented that the reporting system on which communication formally is based is tailored by the actors, rather than is designed by a consultant. How do they do that? How does the culture of the organisation appear to the actors in such designing work? How the system is rendered meaningful?

Control-through paper system

At the two plants, several groups of the factory members are responsible for taking records of the production (see Figure 1). Checkers, foremen, and supervisors are the first to record followed by administration officers who then prepare reports based on this information submitted to the office of the production director and the accounting department in the Head Office. The paper system of control involves several records and reports: record for the production of products (500ml/1500ml, etc), forms of materials requisition and return, report of production output, minutes of transferring final product, monitoring of target, daily production report, report of products rejected, and monthly production report.

Figure 1 Members involved in recording in a Plan
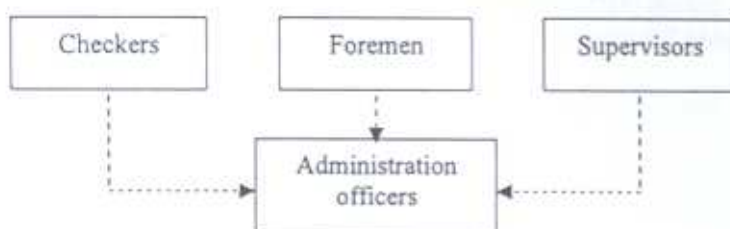
Note: It does not show hierarchical positions amongst them

Actually, unlike the checkers, the involvement of the foremen and supervisors in recording is just minimal, as the main responsibility of the supervisors is on the whole aspects the production process, and the foremen's job is to help the supervisor in order to guarantee that workers have performed good manufacturing practices.

The checkers have to keep their eyes on production lines and to fill in several forms recording what they are seeing. In each plant, there are several production lines depending on the numbers of the product to produce. For each line of each shift, there is one checker on duty. A checker has to fill in a pre-printed form of record for production. Before a shift starts, the checker receives from the materials store all materials needed for producing the targeted amount of a particular product such as bottles, seals, lids, labels, and boxes, and then records such data in the form. The checker has also to record in the form any problem encountered in for example a conveyor, a washer, or a filer. While the checker's work is just to record, the supervisor of the line is then supposed to take any necessary action to solve such problems. Into this form of record for production, data about the amounts of "rejected materials" and "rejected products" due to their quality like "dingy" or "leaking are also to be recorded. Taking decisions of which materials or final products should be rejected is the responsibility of quality control people. Along the production line, there are quality control members doing "visual control" at all stages of production process.

In order to get the materials from the warehouse store, the production supervisor is asked to prepare a form that is also used for recording the unused and returned materials. The types and amounts of materials needed are calculated by the production manager based on a daily production target. The daily production target is also calculated by the production manager based on the weekly target determined through a so called "PPC meeting."

Checkers have also to record the detail of the final products in the report of production output just after a particular production process is completed in each production line. This record has to be taken regularly and timely for every fifteen minutes.

Based on the reports prepared by checkers, then the plant administration office has to prepare monthly production reports. The monthly production report brings information of the amounts of products produced. A production target is set up for each period through production planning control meeting held by the office of production director. While the daily and periodical production data are presented, target and realisation of production are also

there. The products are grouped into the products for local and export markets, Philippine, Singapore, Brunei, and Australia, as they are also produced separately.

So far, we have seen the reports of matters related to production. There are also daily and monthly reports of the delivery of the products from the plant stores to the area warehouses.[5] The report contains information the type and number of products delivered. Although the daily reports are sent everyday to the office of the production director, in the monthly report we can also see the daily delivery position within the month. Besides the movement of the materials and products, the administration offices have also to prepare the reports showing the flow of reusable containers, such as the containers of 5 gallon, and the glass bottles of 950ml and 375 ml products.

Control through Budgeting

I am now joining with Citeureup plant's managers in a weekly meeting, they call "production meeting". However, those here are the manager of production, quality control, technique, and some other staff. Before the meeting is started, Suparman, the production manager, a drop-out of a university mechanical engineering, student, introduced me to the others. Surprisingly, they are interested in studying in Australila. For nearly half an hour, I am responsible to talk something about that. Lina, the quality control manager, looks very interested as she has graduated from a university as a food processing engineer. At this weekly meeting, they talk any problem they encouonter in their own jobs.

> The technique manager: "VIT often uses my .... [mentioning perhaps a name of tools, but I miss that words]".
> The quality control manager: "It does not matter, all belong to Mr.Air"
> The technique manager: "Yes...., but it blows up my budget".
> The quality control manager: ..... [just calm, no reply].

The above notes from the field explores that the vocabulary of "budget" is associated with 'a bargaining' to gain an authorisation to buy something, or to spend the company's money whether it is to buy something, or to spend the company's money whether it is to buy a pencil, a set of computers, a machine, or even a truck. In such budgeting discourse, the notion of "budget" never stands with an adjective. Thus there is no production budget, no sales budget, no comprehensive annual budget, not to mention long-term planning, but they have "sales target, and "production target". There is also no room for the accounting people to be involved in the budgeting discourse. "Budgeting is nothing to do with accounting numbers, but with Mr.Marsal," a manager says, "any thing that makes the company spend money,

including the recruitment of new employees, has to go to Mr.Marsal" who was formally the expert staff human resources but then is granted by Mr.Air as the only person to have authority to approve the "budgets". Previously, this authority was with Mr.Air himself. Why Marsal?

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5   The Company has four areas warehouses around Jakarta.

The researcher: Why budget is under Mr.Marsal?
The Finance Director: He is an elder, but very rational. We need such a powerful person as a "watchdog".[6]

Each month, every departmental manager of a plant has to prepare a list of sorts of things, that they need to be supplied with for the operation of his/her department. Based on the lists, the plant manager has to draft the monthly budget of the plant to be completed by 16th of each month. Then the plant manager has to come personally to see Mr.Marshal in order to "defend" the budget. In this meeting, each question raised by Mr.Marsal should be answered by a convincing argument, otherwise the manager "will get less or nothing". By 28th of each month, all budgets from all units have to be finalised. The approved budget then will sent to the office of the finance director.

It is by the order of Mr.Marsal that in the budget of November, for instance, the information of the realisation for the month of October must be accompanied. "I need it to take a comparison", I was told by Mr.Marsal.

Actually bargaining with Mr.Marsal for the managers is confusing as they are not provided with a clear guideline. "Mr.Marsal will always 'cut' our budget proposal," a manager says, "it is very hard to get all what we ask them to provide." For the managers, convincing him is difficult, sometimes frustrating. A plant manager told me that it is a bit easier to convince Mr.Marsal when things that are proposed to buy are those needed for keeping production running well. "So, just convince him that your request would be urgent for production," he said. This manager told me his experience.

> I strongly needed one heavy light bulb, I put it down in my budget and told to Martha that the bulb was very important since it was for production. Then, I got it four instead of one.

A frustrating experience dealing with Mr.Marsal is also told to me by Warsito, the manager of the department of work safety and health.

> Workers in the factories used to have a cup of milk everyday, with 10 grams of milk powder. After a careful observation, I submitted a proposal asking the company to increase it to be 15 grams. What happened was instead of getting more milk, the workers got more sugar. The reason given to me was that it was not relevant to have more calories by supplying more milk. Now, much of the workers do not want to drink that, because it is too sweet. We need to supply them with more milk, not sugar.

The same manager still has another story, that is:

> I proposed to buy some appliances to set up fire protection installation. However, I had never got any response. As there was a fire burning in a factory, they installed that without any requirement from me.

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6   The words in the parentheses are originally native, while others my Indonesian-English translation.

Another informant told me that

> A budget proposed to buy new uniforms for security officers came to Mr.Marsal's hands. In order to approve it, Mr.Marsal ordered the chief of the security officers to ask all the officers to come to the head office at 06.00 in the morning and get ready for a briefing. What he found was that all the officers were wearing good complete uniforms. Then, Martha told the chief "look all come with complete and still good uniforms, so you do not need to buy a new one."

While for the managers, budgeting is confusing, for Mr.Marsal it is clear.

> In 1980s, the Company was growing up very vast. I would call it there was an explosion not growth as the annual rate of growth was 40%. There was a "bottled water boom." At this time, any "inefficiency" could be excused, but not now. Our competitors are also in growth. Therefore inefficiency now is something not tolerable. I talked to Mr.Air about that. That is why now we have to produce water in the most economical way. Those who want to buy something, have to put it in their budget which should be submitted to me.

"Efficiency" is a key world in the Company. Outsiders who come to the head office easily will see a clear notice "if you do not need it, please turn it off". In an official speech at a special occasion for 1994 Happy New Year, both Mr.Air and Mr.Marsal talked about "cost consciousness". The President Director, talked first, and brought the issue that:

> In 1994 the Company will be facing much stronger challenges. Therefore, we all have to be more cautious (*The Company News*, January 1994, p.20).

Mr.Marsal then took a chance, providing ways to encounter such challenge. He said that:

> We have to be more conscious on efficiency. We must minimise expenditures even on likely simple things like electricity, pencils and soon. We have to make this Company become "streamline", so it can run smoothly and fast (*The Company News*, January 1994, p.20).

The last speaker at the occasion was Mr.Air, starting that:

> We all must continuously attempt to be not wasteful in each of our steps. What I mean is do not spend money for something un-useful. We have to be more "cost conscious" (*The Company News, January 1994*, p.20).

At the Company, 'minimise expenditure', 'do not waste money' are the other words of "efficiency" which is believed by the top executives to be a key factor for success in facing the challenge. This is how they make sense of the organisational situation.

The foregoing story of the Company's budgeting system shows that it is through its specific system that the top executives make the belief meaningful to the Company's members. Thus, at the Company, the meaning of the symbol notion of efficiency is constructed and reconstructed through the discourse on budgeting. To face the increasing stronger competition, 'being efficient' seems to be the only way. Here, 'being efficient' means consciously reducing costs or spending less money. This is what Mr.Alr means by "cost conscious".

The following citations come from my field notes taken when I was sitting friendly in the area of truck pool together with an assistant manager and a couple of truck drivers.

> The assistant manager: "Look at this truck. Now they use retread tyres. It is dangerous, isn't it? Jakarta's roads are very hot. Retread tyres may cause an explosion. But, it is the way the company saves money.

I am not sure whether the retread tyres are being used due to the policy of the manager of the delivery armada, or because the manager proposal to buy new tyres is rejected by Mr.Marsal, who may then ask them to use the retread ones. With more than one hundred light trucks for the deliver armada, using the retread tyres will certainly save money.

Regarding capital expenditures, at the Company, proposals for such investments come from all units, but all have to go to Mr. Marsal, not to include the establishment of new factory which is prepared by the office of research and development. While there was no formal guideline for proposal preparation, a proposal will be prepared when there is a need for purchasing long-term assets.

DISCUSSING NOTE

The foregoing description have brought forward an understanding that organisational cultural milieu imbedded within the Company is a part of that inter-related influences. The Company is *its own world* of the people there (Geertz, 1993a) so that they have their own shared symbolic meanings that define their *model of* and *model for* how to control their organisational actions. Thus, culture of the Company is a fabric of meaning in terms of which the people there interpret their experience and guide their action. Understanding the Company's control practices then is an endeavour to connect actions of the people to its sense, not to relate the people's behaviour to its determinants.

In the Company, we can see a cultural meaning within the budgeting practices. The practices of budgeting are centred on Mr. Marshal. Although his formal position is as an expert staff, but he has been granted a specific authorisation to be a watch-dog for maintaining efficiency. Such authorisation is not licensed to the Company's functional managers but through Marshal Mr.Air would enable to be "being present" in any decision to expend any cents of *rupiah*.

The story of the Company's budgeting practice suggests the "experience-near" concept of efficiency obtains its meaning from the specific budgeting practice. Central to the budgeting practices is the motivation to maintain the company running low in money spending, rather than to carefully construct a business plan. Lowering cost or money spending is the real significance which has been implanted in the notion of "efficiency" and "cost-con-

sciousness". Actually, "efficiency," "expenditure", and "budgeting", are terms that belong to accountants, who traditionally have authority to provide meaning for them. However, it is not the case at the Company.

As the budget is approved, the execution is by the department of logistics at the head office. At the Company, the purchasing of all daily needs is centralised under that department. When I asked Mr.Wandy of this issue, I was told that it is for controlling, in the sense that it is to avoid any possible 'corruption.' Mr.Wandy says

> if there is someone who would like to act corruptly through the purchasing even if it is one person [the manager] sooner or later we will know.

Therefore, while someone controls cost through its physical measures, someone else looks after the financial side. This kind of practice produces a situation where the managers are exempted from financial affairs, and the accounting people are absent from the budgeting discourse.

We can see also see that the absence of financial figures in the written control systems, as all information communicated through the system are physical in nature. It is through this kind of information that "events which happened in the organisation (in this case, the plants) are made "visible." Therefore, the control system is not in the accounting language but in physical or technical one. Actually, this is not only true for the control system in the plants, but also, as we have seen, it its true for the Company's budgeting system; more that that, the everyday organisational discourse. The organisational action is made visible not through accounting but through *counting*.

If we examine carefully the reports prepared by the production people, we will see how a great attention has been paid to "quality" and "target". Each quality control procedure taken up during the production process has been recorded and reported carefully to the production director in detail. Throughout such reports, the production director could easily identify what product is being produced in each production line, when (time and shift) and the quantity. By this way, the production members create a socially and culturally accepted 'truth' about their work through their own design recording and reporting system which follows carefully the flows of materials and finished products. Thus, this is a way in which the quality culture is produced and reproduced by the production people. At the same time, it shows how "quality" becomes a cultural vehicle as well as guidance for the production people in their organisational action.

CONCLUSION

The culture of the Company is constructed along the notion of quality which its meaning cultivated within organisational action and interaction. For the Company people, quality could not be opposed to quantity and is not just a matter of producing healthy water, but it is a concrete embodiment of ideas, serving as tangible formulation of the *model of* organisational reality and *model for* organisationing the reality. The culture is a fabric of meaning in terms of which the people interpret their experience and guide their action.

Due to its specific reference for a model of and model for organisationing of the organisational actions, financial and accounting numbers are missing from the Company control practices. The meaning of quality does not encompass financial matters. The native terms of "efficiency", "expenditure" and "target" have nothing to do with accounting figures and people, but rooted in the symbolic meaning of quality. In the Company, we can see throughout this paper that the organisational control including budgeting is a cultural practice.

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