

# GOJEK IN CONFLICT: CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

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Since its launching on January 2015, GoJek drivers have somehow survived and multiplied despite many obstacles and protests from traditional *ojek* drivers (just to name a few). They have also shown that the existence of new technology cannot be stopped, or even slowed down, regardless of complaints and objections directed toward them. As most of the people are now carrying smartphones or other gadgets that connect them to the web, it was only a matter of time before GoJek or other new enterprises “invade” and even “replace” the traditional practice of doing business. This paper looks upon GoJek in Bandung through cultural perspective since it differs significantly from the one in Jakarta. Whereas GoJek drivers in Bandung do not show any GoJek’s symbol or identity, the ones in Jakarta are still brave enough to wear their GoJek’s helmet and jacket. Whereas GoJek drivers in Bandung are banned to do their business in certain areas and tried to be invisible, the ones in Jakarta are more flexible and notable. Hence, thru in-depth interview and field work, the results indicate that *ojek* drivers in Bandung are very protective toward their territories, they are also comfortable with how they usually do their business, and are still unwilling to use mobile applications. The results also show that GoJek drivers in Bandung do not feel as secure as the ones in Jakarta, they sometimes have to strip their attributes for safety reasons, and do not “park” in open areas or public spaces. The reason for such differences, is because Bandung is not as hegemonic as Jakarta, and it still holds strongly to its root (or *Sundanese* culture) which brings difficulty for ‘new ideas’ or ‘new venture’ to be accepted by its people.

Keywords: GoJek, new technology, *sundanese* culture, and hegemony.

## I. INTRODUCTION

As it was decided in December 1997, the ASEAN Leaders in Kuala Lumpur, that by the year 2020 ASEAN will transform into a stable, prosperous, and highly competitive region with equitable economic development, and reduced poverty and socio-economic disparities (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2008). Three pillars will be executed, in order to realize ASEAN Community which are ASEAN Economic Community, ASEAN Security Community, and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. At the 12<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in January, 2007, the Leaders agreed to accelerate of an ASEAN Community by 2015 through hastening the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community so that ASEAN's region will have free movement of goods, services, investment, skilled labor, and free flow of capital (Association of Southeast Asian Nations 2008). One of the reasons why is because there is a deep concerns that Southeast Asia would be overtaken by the emerging market economies of China and India. Thus, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) would provide the means for ASEAN economies to remain competitive in the fast growing economic challenges (Hew, 2005). Steps or building blocks to support AEC have been establish since 1992 thru ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), as well as ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services (AFAS) in 1995, and the ASEAN Investment Area (AIA) in 1998.

Based on the study conducted by Benny and Abdullah, “there is a high level of awareness and understanding of ASEAN on the part of the Indonesian public” (2011). Most of the respondents claimed that they are aware of ASEAN (of its formation and objectives). However, they appeared to have little knowledge of ASEAN Community or have even heard-read about it because of minimum publication and explanation to the general public by the government. Despite their lack of knowledge, Indonesian respondents were supportive of the idea eventhough they were skeptical of the benefits that they will received. A further study needs to be conducted to see how the Indonesians' perception and attitude towards AEC (in particular) and ASEAN Community (in general).

This paper is an attempt to see and understand whether the concept of the AEC is acceptable and applicable to the Indonesian people, nowadays. It will specifically look upon the phenomenon of GoJek in Bandung through cultural perspective as its existence rises

many issues. This paper will, therefore, lay the groundwork and then identify the problem. It will then analyze the socio-problem of GoJek in Bandung, through cultural angle.

## II. DISCUSSION

It is a common knowledge that Indonesia is famous for its traffic jam and terrible public transportation. As such, many inhabitants usually resolve by using their own modes of transportation such as car or motorcycle, and by hiring taxi or *ojek* (motorcycle taxi) in order to get to their destinations on time. However, a recent means of transportation called ‘GoJek’ (a motorcycle taxi that can be reached through phone and mobile application) has taken Indonesia by storm since January 2015 in which leaves the government astounded. Its presence has created heated pros and cons in society as there is no legitimate law that supports it. On the other hand, its existence has helped the government and overall people in dealing with traffic jam, transportation’s problem, and unemployment. Thus, GoJek becomes a baffling phenomenon.

According to Yudi Widiana, Vice-Chairman of Commission V of the House of Representatives who deals with transportation and public work, GoJek needs to be regulated by a legitimate law that will protect its existence and its customers. He also points out that the Ministry of Transportation needs to solve the issue of two-wheeled transportation that are considered non-public transportation. The reason is because *ojek* (as well as GoJek) can no longer be ignored or stopped. Widiana claims that the idea behind GoJek is an excellent one, because it has helped many people and is not against the law. Thus, a legitimate law that describes two-wheeled transportation as one type of public transportation would (hopefully) minimized horizontal conflicts between traditional *ojek* drivers and GoJek drivers (cnnindonesia.com).

Since 1998, *ojek* drivers has so far been in a problematic position. On one side, there is a demand for its existence while on another, they have no legitimacy. Based on the Minister's decision Number 35 2003 about Organizing the Transport of People on the Road with Public Transportation, two-wheeled means of transportation cannot be categorized as public transportation. As a result, recent *ojek* drivers – both traditional and modern ones – are now asking for legitimation. Once the law backs them up, unnecessary conflict between those two would essentially be reduced to a minimum. At this moment, no law protects the new-comer

GoJek. Consequently, violent attempts to stop or diminish GoJek's presence by traditional *ojek* drivers – who think that their customers are being 'taken' or 'stolen' – still occur until today.

Launched on January 2015 and GoJek has since hired 10,000 drivers who are spread throughout big cities such as Jakarta-Bogor-Depok-Tangerang-Bekasi (JABODETABEK), Bali, Bandung and Surabaya. The founder of PT GoJek Indonesia, Nadiem Makarim, states that they are still recruiting Gojek drivers and expanding their opportunities in other regions. Although he did not specifically say the numbers of how many GoJek drivers he would hire or where he would expand his business, Makarim explains that it all depends on the market's demand (bisniskeuangan.kompas.com).

Hence, GoJek's success not only alarms the traditional *ojek* who do not use phone or mobile application but also other modes of transportation such as taxis and buses, to name a few. This paper will focus on the miscommunication and social problems between traditional *ojek* drivers and GoJek drivers in Bandung by using Strategy Communication Business, as a tool to analyze and give solution to the problem.

## **2.1.OJEK**

An *ojek* (motorcycle taxi) is a motorcyclist that offers rides to people who wants to go to their destinations easily and rapidly. As the traffic is usually heavy and hard, *ojek* offers a way out for those who want to get to work or somewhere else stress-free trip. In other words, without thinking too much of traffic-jams or full-parking lots, the passengers can loosen up during the journey.

*Ojek* has become an essential mode of transportation in Indonesia, since some public transportations are not well-connected and that walking around is not usually safe or pleasurable. However, the problem in getting an *ojek* comes when you have to bargain for the price. The distance between the departure to the arrival points are sometimes tricky to be measured. Most of the time, bargaining is an impossibility because the *ojek* drivers will leave the passengers no choice. If the local people must face with that difficulty, imagine what difficulties tourists must deal with. Aside from the language-barrier, they would also encounter different local-customs.

## 2.2.GOJEK

GoJek is a motorcycle taxi that can be reached through phone and mobile application. As other ordinary taxi, the fare is fixed depends on the distance. However, differ to the traditional *ojek*, GoJek offers cheap and easy access to customers. Aside from that, GoJek offers door-to-door services that customers can choose (transport service, instant courier, and shopping & delivery). Whereas before, customers must walk to find the closest *ojek*, now they can download an application from Android or Apple that allows them to book without any hassle. Another aspect that benefit customers, is the fare (pay-what-you-get-service) that remove any awkward bargaining that usually comes with traditional *ojek*. So far, those who had used GoJek had only positive things to say.

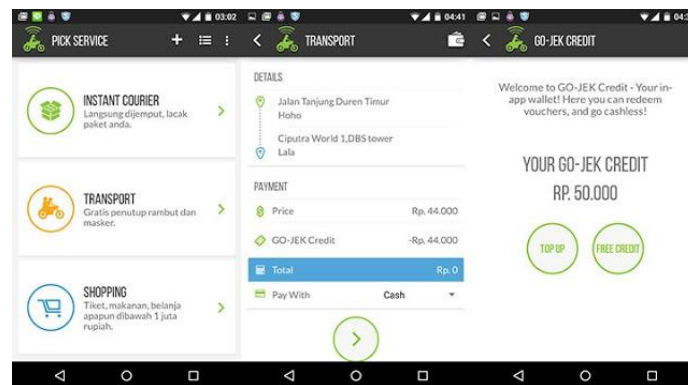


Figure 1: GoJek Application  
Source: techinasia.com

In truth, GoJek's innovation is not completely new. There is similar application called MyTeksi or GrabTaxi founded by Malaysian entrepreneur. The concept is pretty much the same, while MyTeksi specifies in cab / car taxi instead of motorcycle taxi. Beside that the concept of fixed fare motorcycle taxi was formerly introduced by O'Jack Taxi Motor in Yogyakarta or Bandung TaxiBike in Bandung.

So the question is, what makes GoJek more phenomenal than the previous motorcycle taxi? It is because GoJek adapt itself with current technology which not only provides phone number, it also creates mobile application that can be downloaded through Playstore and Appstore. The interface is user-friendly, wrapped with good design, provides professional-look drivers with their own uniform, and solves people's problem.

Aside from transportation, GoJek also provides other services such as instant courier, Go-Food and shopping which help Indonesians getting what they need without the trouble of facing rush-hour traffic. In other words, customers can order food from 15,000 restaurants that are on GoJek's list, choose how they want their food to be and pay for the food after they receive from the driver according to the bill. Another advantage of using GoJek is they offer GoJek credit which is their cashless method for paying the services provided by GoJek. However, if a customer does not have enough credit to pay the delivery fee, he or she cannot pay the rest with cash. Thus, it is advisable that customer do a Top Up or Pay with Cash method.

Unfortunately, it must be acknowledged that the presence of GoJek offers a social problem which arises with its popularity. Many traditional *ojek* drivers are against it, since GoJek takes away their customers. They also feel the rights to stop GoJek's popularity since they have paid an annual price for the track. In other words, they have already rent the path that they from one point to another to find customers. So when traditional *ojek* waits for customers to approach them, typically, now they are surprised and furious that GoJek drivers suddenly come and pick up potential customers.

According to one traditional *ojek* driver, "Normally, we wait for our turn to transport customers. We make a roaster so everybody will have the chance to get some money. When GoJek arrives, I did not understand it, at first. I just see it come and go quickly and swiftly with our potential customers. Then, my friend explains it to me and I become angry. We have waited for almost a day, with zero customers, and this new driver takes them...just like that. We were here first, and we have to pay for an annual fee, it is not fair that GoJek driver take our turf."



Figure 2: *GoJek/Ojeg Tol Dilarang Keras Masuk ke Wilayah Ciganitri*  
Source: Private Collection



Figure 3: No GoJek  
Source: Private Collection

Consequently, it is no wonder that in many areas GoJek drivers are banned to enter and/or are not welcomed. It is also not surprising that there are physical clashes between *ojek* and GoJek drivers. As a result, fallen-victims (usually from GoJek's side) become a common incident. In order to 'save' themselves, GoJek drivers in Bandung do not wear their uniforms or attributes. Thus, they can safely pick up customers and/or transport delivery without any obstacles.



Figure 4: GoJek Drivers  
Source: ekubis.beritaprima.com

The attributes that are shown above (Figure4), are the ones that GoJek drivers wear daily when they are on duty. Unfortunately, their identity which help customers into recognizing them on the streets, is more often a source of conflict between themselves and traditional *ojek* drivers. When a traditional *ojek* drivers sees a GoJek drivers in uniform, he will immediately asks the later to stay away from his territory aggressively. Such confrontation becomes more often and acute, as more customers witness the occurrence in front of their eyes. One example happened at the University of Indonesia where a customer asked a GoJek driver to pick him up on campus, but as the driver waited, he was approached by several *ojek* drivers which told him to leave by means of force. Consequently, the GoJek driver drove away and the customer had to use the local *ojek* with a highly-priced fare (tribunnews.com)

Nevertheless, it must be noted that the GoJek driver's uniform also contribute to an 'undeniable' sense of solidarity among themselves. They would help and respect each other more than traditional *ojek* drivers. One example of such solidarity and open-mindedness just happened on Wednesday, 16 September 2015 in response to Gunawan's accident. Gunawan was one of GoJek's driver in Jakarta. Him, his pregnant wife and son got into an accident which resulted 2 people dead on the spot (Gunawan and his wife, Lestari) and leaving Aldo (Gunawan's 8 years-old son) in critical condition. As an act of solidarity, all GoJek drivers in Jakarta accompanied Gunawan and Lestari's corps to the harbor where they were being shipped to Sumatra (or Lampung) to be laid in peace by their families. Such phenomenon indicates that the bonds between GoJek drivers in Jakarta is indeed, very strong as they share the same experience and obstacles while on the street.

### 2.3.GOJEK IN BANDUNG



The first thing that strikes GoJek Bandung from other GoJek drivers in Jakarta, is the lack of (or non-existence) identity that usually comes with its drivers. Whereas in Jakarta, their presence are well-known, in Bandung however, GoJek drivers are trying to make their existence scarce. When visiting Jakarta, it is a common to see GoJek drivers (almost) everywhere, especially at business districts during traffic jam. It seems that the high-demand reduces Jakarta GoJek drivers' fear in showing their identities. It also appears that Ahok's consent and support for GoJek in Jakarta, increases their courage in minding their business as usual (despite protests or intimidations from traditional *ojek* drivers).

On several occasions, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama – mostly known as Ahok and Jakarta's current governor – has given his consent openly for GoJek to exist and prosper. He argues that GoJek helps the government dealing with poor public transport and unemployment. Ahok also reasons that if there are parties (such as buses, traditional *ojek* and taxis) who protest GoJek's existence, then they only need to improve their services in order to compete with GoJek (businesskeuangan.org).

Ahok's support does not differ from Ridwan Kamil's – mostly known as Kang Emil – in Bandung. Both prominent figures have given free access to GoJek since no laws banned them from operating, so far. As long as the government does not issue specific or a revised regulation concerning two-wheeled transportation, Kang Emil welcomes GoJek, in Bandung. Both of them also realize that competition in business is a common practice. Those who do not conform to new technology and/or invention will usually struggle with new competitors. As such, it is only a matter of time until all parties adapt to the new situation (GoJek).

However, as mentioned above, GoJek drivers in Bandung would shun any attributes that associate them with GoJek. Hence, direct confrontations are rare but unspoken resistance from traditional *ojek* are felt more pronounced. Especially after many people use GoJek as their daily transportation. One (new) loyal customer is Putra, age 37 years old, who uses GoJek from Monday to Friday to go to work, and only drives his car during the weekend with his family. He explains that he can actually save a lot of time and money by riding GoJek instead of driving his own car. *“Let's put it this way, I pay IDR 20,000 for GoJek daily to go to work and getting back home in 30-45 minutes...so it means that I only spend IDR 100,000 per week and not so much time on the road. If I drive my car, I would have to pay around IDR 300,000 per two weeks and spend at least 2 hours just to get to work. That's*

*not including all the knick-knacks of maintaining a car. I would rather use GoJek from now on, because of those reasons.*" (A. Putra, personal communication, 10 September 2015).

Similar to Putra's explanation, Khairunisa, 31 years old, confirms that she is *hooked* since ordering GoJek from mobile phone helps her from walking and looking for traditional *ojek* at some distance, gives her rapid pick up as well as specific fee that she has to pay later on. According to Khairunisa, *"most of time, I am uncertain of the fee that I have to pay. But with GoJek, before I am being picked up, I know precisely the price that I have to pay and that is a huge relieve for me. I have recommended GoJek to my family and friends, ever since I experienced it."* (Khairunisa, personal communication, 1 September 2015).

Nevertheless, it must be noted that some GoJek's customers also experience disappointments. One of them is Nadya, 20 years old, who confesses that once while her mobile phone's battery was low (only 5% remaining lifetime left) the driver asked her to cancel her order. He did not explained the reason and she did not have the time to ask why. Luckily for her, that experience only happened once as she likes to use GoJek instead of *angkot* (mini-bus-like and Bandung's regular public transportation) which usually takes "forever" to get to a destination. Aside from that, Nadya explains that, *"to be truthful, the price that I spend for GoJek and angkot is not so significant. If I spend IDR 20,000 for a GoJek, I would spend IDR 18,000 if I ride an angkot...but the catch is, I still have to walk some distance after I got out the angkot, while GoJek will immediately stop in front of my door-step."* (R.S. Nadya, personal communication, 22 Agustus 2015).

Fortunately, up until now, *angkot* drivers do not feel threatened by GoJek in Bandung. Based on several interviews done for this paper, most of the *angkot* drivers think that there are still a lot of people who become their passengers. According to Asep, 43 years old, *"the price for using an angkot is still cheaper than GoJek, and aside from that, it is not easy to book a GoJek driver. It is a bit complicated....so no, I am not worried with GoJek in Bandung. Come to think of it, to me [between] traditional ojek and GoJek drivers are the same. Two-wheeled transportation has been around way before GoJek arrives, recently."* (Asep, personal communication, 12 Agustus 2015).

However, unlike *angkot* drivers, taxi drivers feel the impact of GoJek in Bandung. The reason is that their customers are significantly decreasing. Whereas before they could

have more than 5 passengers, now they would consider lucky if they get 5 passengers in one day. According to Agus, 25 years old, *“Before GoJek entered Bandung, passengers were plenty because those who used our service were not only a group of people, but individuals as well. Now, most of our passengers are a group of people only.”* (K. Agus, personal communication, 12 Agustus 2015).

### III. GOJEK THROUGH CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

There are two orientations to interpersonal conflicts. They are conflict of opportunity and conflict as destructive. According to Martin and Nakayama (2010) *“Many cultural groups view conflict as ultimately unproductive for relationships.”* In addition, based on Stella Ting-Toomey and her colleagues’ research (1991) the two orientations are based on different underlying cultural values involving identity and face saving. Thus, in accordance with GoJek’s conflict (that happens specifically) in Ciganitri, Bandung, two of the reasons that trigger it, are economy and the conflict of interest which still happen until now. Where in one hand, the *ojek* drivers feel and think that their existence give them the right to have the customers before the GoJek drivers. Whereas in GoJek’s drivers point of view, it is the customers’ rights and decisions to choose between *ojek* or GoJek for their purpose. As one of the *ojek* drivers explains, *“Let the GoJek stays in Jakarta, because if it spreads in Bandung many would be out of jobs and we are older and less educated....so it is very hard for us to understand new technology. We have always done like this, so let us do it in our own way.”*

Accordingly, the *ojek*’s explanation above describe the underlying problem brilliantly since first, it illustrates the need for protecting his (or all the *ojek* drivers) line of work as they are older and not sophisticated enough to compete with younger and more educated GoJek drivers. Second, they feel the apprehension of new technology that brought insecurities to themselves and their business since they think it is too much hassle to learn new things at their age. Third, as a collectivistic and tight community, the *ojek* drivers in Ciganitri-Bandung are reluctant for new changes as they *‘have always done like this, so let us do it in our own way.’* That statement points out the difference between how the Bandung and Jakarta people do things and tolerate new competitors differently.

Thus, it is not surprising that in Ciganitri-Bandung, GoJek drivers are banned to enter the area as they are also reluctant to drive customers near it. The consequence that the GoJek drivers have to face is brutal dismissal. They would not only be forced to leave the area and customer, but also think on how to stay alive. The *ojek* drivers in Ciganitri-Bandung are not

shy nor subtle people. They would immediately approach a ‘suspected’ GoJek driver in group and force him to leave instantly. They would also warn the customer for not using GoJek drivers anymore in ‘their’ area.



Figure 5: GoJek’s Warning at Ciganitri-Bandung  
Source: Private Collection

As a consequence, GoJek drivers in Ciganitri-Bandung do not wear their uniforms (jackets) or helmet in fear of their safety. They also try to be ‘invisible’ or ‘hidden’ so they select and pick up customers carefully and quickly. Their identity are so concealed that it is almost impossible to differentiate between GoJek drivers or students or ordinary people. That situation differs significantly from the one in Jakarta, where GoJek drivers can be seen and recognized at almost every corner of the streets.



Figure 6: GoJek driver and customer in Jakarta  
Source: Private Collection

On several occasions, the researcher uses GoJek near Ciganitri-Bandung, and the experience were very uncomfortable as the driver looked very agitated and wanted the ‘whole business’ to end as soon as possible. Before they pick up the researcher, they phoned her and asked for identification so they will not pick the wrong customer. They would then approach

and ask the researcher to mount their motorcycles quickly and without the usual ritual of giving masks (to avoid air pollution). They would also ask the researcher to be quick when getting off their motorcycle so they could quickly go back and shun *ojek* drivers in the area. No conversation nor questions asked.

Those experience differ significantly from the ones in Jakarta, where the GoJek drivers would ask politely and patiently if we needed anything (as they hand the mask) as well as making small conversation. They would also ask the customer to click the button ‘accomplish’ in the application when the customer had arrived to her destinations. The GoJek drivers also confidently wear their helmets and jackets and are not afraid to be seen on the streets. Hence, the experience were more agreeable than the ones in Bandung as the drivers were more friendly and cordial.

#### **IV. METHOD**

The methodology that this paper uses in-depth interviews and field observation. The researcher interviews 5 GoJek drivers (in Bandung and Jakarta) as well as people who have used GoJek. In addition, the researcher have ordered and used GoJek and *ojek* for most of her field research both in Bandung and Jakarta.

#### **V. CONCLUSION**

Based on testimonies thru interviews, Bandung is still in proses of adapting to new ‘competitors’ that has taken Bandung (and Indonesia, in general) by surprise. There are still pros and cons concerning its existence. In addition to that, the current law concerning two-wheeled vehicles as public transport is still unclear and incoherent with the situation at hand. Where in one hand the law prohibit it to be a public transport, in reality, people have used two-wheeled vehicles as public transportation for a very long time.

In accordance with GoJek’s problem in Bandung, Ciganitri-Bandung more specifically, the drivers are very much afraid to the *ojek* drivers in the area. They are also prone in hiding their identities in order to avoid any conflicts. The reason is because the *ojek* drivers in the area tend to be more ruthless and forceful in chasing GoJek drivers. Their actions are based on their inferiority feelings toward new technology and changes that they have to cope during their ageing period of time. Thus, lack of education and willingness to learn make them passionate in saving their source income fiercely and even forcefully.

Thus, before GoJek expands its business to other parts of the country, the government needs to legitimize the current law, and the company needs to push it so that its employees would be protected by abusers on the streets. As many prominent people and experts have said, it is impossible to stop GoJek (or other business venture) that uses technology from existing and expanding. Especially in the era where virtual communication is becoming universal and that ASEAN Economy Community (AEC) is right in front of our eyes, opportunities are ready to be explored and discovered.

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