

UNIVERSITAS ATMA JAYA YOGYAKARTA Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik



Media Technology



CONFERENCE ON MEDIA, COMMUNICATIONS, AND SOCIOLOGY

ISBN 978-602-99069-4-3

PROCEEDING

IMAGINING e-INDONESIA:

Local

Local Wisdom in the Midst of Media Technology and Communication Policy

Yogyakarta 27 November 2015



Penerbit: Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta

Imagining e-Indonesia: Local Wisdom in the Midst of Media Technology and Communication Policy



Diterbitkan oleh: Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta @2015

PROCEEDING CONFERENCE ON COMMUNICATIONS, MEDIA AND SOCIOLOGY 2015

"Imagining e-Indonesia: Local Wisdom in the Midst of Media Technology and Communication Policy" Yogyakarta, 26 – 27 November 2015

Editor: Josep J. Darmawan, MA Ranggabumi Nuswantoro, MA Lukas Deni Setiawan, MA Pupung Arifin, M.Si

Lay Out & Cover: A. Beny Pramudyanto, M.Si

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Conference on Communications, Media and Sociology 2015 diselenggarakan oleh Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta

Alamat: Gedung Bunda Teresa FISIP Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta Jl. Babarsari No 6, Yogyakarta 55281 Phone: (0274) 487711, Fax. (0274) 487748

ISBN 978-602-99069-4-3



Daftar Isi

Kata Pengantar	vii
Propaganda Politik Melalui Media Film Animasi Edoardo Irfan	1
Komunikasi Pembangunan di Indonesia: Telaah Pemikiran Alwi Dahlan dan Santoso Hamidjojo Sri Handayani, Nisa Alfira, Lailiya Nur Rokhman, Elyvia Inayah	11
Siasat Radio Komunitas Menyikapi Aturan Pemerintah yang Memberatkannya Agar Menjadi Media Alternatif yang Ideal Aryo Subarkah Eddyono, Mirana Hanathasia	27
Observing the Indonesia Newly Regulated Villages from the Participatory Development Communication Perspective: A Study of the Contribution of the Indonesia National Program for Community Empowerment (PNPM) for Urban Self-Reliance in Transforming Villagers from Community Driven Development to Village Driven Development at Wonokerso and Sutojayan Village, Pakisaji Sub-District Malang Regency East Java Province Indonesia Rochmad Effendy	47
Tarik Ulur Kebijakan Perfilman Jawa Timur Ellen Meianzi Yazak	59
ISIS, Komunikasi Politik, dan Kejahatan Pascamodern Triyono Lukmantoro	69
TVRI dan Ruang Publik: Antara Harapan dan Kenyataan Teguh Ratmanto	85
Fungsi Kawasan Pedagang Kaki Lima sebagai Media Komunikasi yang Teknokratif, Informatif, <i>Marketable</i> , dan Edukatif di Kawasan Perkotaan Rosmawaty Hilderiah Pandjaitan	97
Pemahaman Undang-Undang Informasi Transaksi Elektronika dan Realitas <i>Cyberculture</i> Pada Generasi Muda di Surabaya Fitria Widiyani Roosinda	113
Analisis Resepsi Komunikasi Politik di Instagram @ridwankamil Citra Melati, Arief Prima Prasetya, Martriana PS	115
Aktivitas Komunikasi Perempuan Pebisnis <i>Online</i> Anne Maryani	131
Personal Touch in Visual Political Messages on Instagram Dyan Rahmiati	141
Pola Komunikasi Komunitas #IndonesiaTanpaJIL Chapter Bogor dalam Fitur Grup Aplikasi WhatsApp Anniesha Hannief, Iqlima Winata, Martriana PS	149
Online Media : Merebut Ruang Publik Menyuarakan Hak Atas Tubuh Perempuan Tri Hastuti Nur Rochimah	161





Instagram as Self-Presentation Platform a Digital Ethnography Studies Isma Adila, Shinta Swastikawara, Yulian Eka Herawati	175
Gen Y, Media Sosial dan Aktualisasi Diri Lenny Setyowati B	181
Efek Contagion Sosial Media Pada Perilaku AIDS Skeptisex Gay Chicken Hawk Agus Naryoso	193
The Power to Change: A Lesson Learned from Comparative Research of Japan and Indonesian Youth Civic Participation in the Online Sphere Desideria Cempaka Wijaya Murti	195
Partisipasi Politik Pemilih Pemula pada Pemilukada Kota Semarang 2015 Melalui Penggunaan Media Sosial Joyo Nur Suryanto Gono	203
Peran Media Massa dalam Mengubah Penampilan Remaja di Aceh Ade Irma	213
Perilaku Plagiasi Siswa SMA Terkait Perkembangan Media Baru: Survei di SMA Tarakanita Magelang, SMA Van Lith Muntilan, dan SMK Pius Magelang Setio Budi HH & Bonaventura Satya Bharata	229
Trend Media Sosial di Kalangan Remaja dalam Perspektif Budaya Populer Arif Budi Prasetya	231
Strategi Komunikasi Kesehatan Menghadapi Kampanye Hitam dan Mitos Vaksinasi Davis Roganda Parlindungan	243
Merumuskan Strategi <i>Public Relations</i> untuk Menghadapi Opini Publik dan Pertukaran Informasi yang tidak terkendali dalam Media Sosial <i>Rofiq Anwar</i>	253
Strategy Between State-Owned Enterprises, Private Corporates, And The Governments In Reputation Conflict Maintenance Of Corporate Social Reponsibility (CSR) Programmes Nurrahmawati	263
How's an Ad Goes Viral? The Strategy of Celebgram Endorsement Nurul Latifatun Nisa	277
Analisis Publisitas Media Kampanye Politik Para Calon Legislatif di Aceh dalam Menghadapi Pemilu 2014 Nur Anisah, Rahmat Saleh	285
Pemanfaatan Website sebagai Media Branding Universitas: Studi terhadap Website resmi Universitas Islam Indonesia (www.uii.ac.id) Mutia Dewi & Narayana Mahendra Prastya	297
Pemetaan Pesan Kehumasan pada Media <i>Website</i> Korporasi Bidang Jasa Rumah Sakit dan Perhotelan di Jakarta Irmulan Sati Tomohardjo & Vita Sari Dewi	309
Indonesia dalam Pandangan Voice of America Kiki Zakiah, Chairiawaty, Askurifai	321

iv 📔



Communication of Ritual In Local Wisdom Preservation Traditional Irrigation System (Subak) In Bali	335
I Dewa Ayu Hendrawathy Putri	
Justifikasi Indonesia sebagai Bangsa Pembantu pada Iklan <i>iRobot</i> Malaysia Mutia Rahmi Pratiwi, Amida Yusriana	353
Harmoni Sosial dalam Kearifan Lokal Turnomo Rahardjo	369
Religious Authority and New Imagined Communities in Indonesia Taufiqur Rahman	381
Konflik Suporter Sepakbola dalam Wacana Media: Wacana Koran-koran Lokal Yogyakarta dalam Kerusuhan Suporter PSIM Yogyakarta Tanggal 13 Maret 2015 Fajar Junaedi	383
Watching the Watch Dog, a Backbone of Media Literacy Hernani Sirikit	397
Jurnalisme Warga, Etika dan Media Kritik: Analisis Deskriptif Kualitatif pada media Kompasiana.com, PasangMata.com, Rubik.Okezone.com, Indonesiana.com Agus Triyono	401
Faktor-faktor yang Mempengaruhi Kepatuhan Anak dalam Restrictive Mediation Tandiyo Pradekso	411
Media as Guardians of the Indonesia Cultural Heritage Rahmawati Zulfiningrum, Lisa Mardiana	427
Literasi Media Remaja SMP terhadap Iklan Rokok Purwanti Hadisiwi	437
Benturan Etika dan Hukum Media di Era Konvergensi Multimedia Supadiyanto	445
Pers Indonesia: <i>Public Interest</i> di antara Kapitalisme dan Profesionalisme Heroe Poerwadi	459
Generasi Muda, Etika dan Media Digital Baru	473

Ami Saptiyono



Kata Pengantar

Abad modern ditandai dengan adanya globalisasi, sinergi dan konvergensi. Sayangnya, dalam wacana keseharian, kita kerap mendengar beberapa orang beranggapan bahwa teori selalu bertentangan dengan praktik, Bahwa apa yang diajarkan di sekolah-sekolah tidak pernah sama dengan yang terjadi di dunia nyata.

Argumen-argumen tersebut muncul karena adanya stigma dan pengkotakkotakan di masyarakat bahwa akademisi dan praktisi berada dalam sebuah oposisi biner yang seolah-olah tidak akan pernah bertemu. Padahal, akademisi dan praktisi sebenarnya bisa bekerja sama dan saling melengkapi satu sama lain dalam bidangbidang yang mereka tekuni. Bahkan, mereka bisa juga saling belajar untuk memperkaya ilmu pengetahuan.

Karena itu, sinergi menjadi kunci penting, apalagi dalam dunia yang makin sarat koneksi dan konvergensi seperti sekarang ini. Dengan adanya sinergi, setiap orang bisa saling bekerja sama untuk memajukan ilmu pengetahuan yang dimiliki dan memperluas pemikiran dan gagasan sehingga tidak terjebak pada fanatisme sempit atau anggapan bahwa ilmunya lebih baik dari ilmu yang lain.

Di COMICOS, kami percaya bahwa berdiskusi dan bertukar pikiran adalah kunci kekayaan wawasan dan ilmu pengetahun. Kita tidak akan berkembang dan mencapai apapun jika hanya sibuk dengan dunia sendiri tanpa bersinergi, berkoneksi dan berjejaring dengan orang-orang di sekitar kita.

Forum seperti COMICOS ini hadir untuk menjadi wadah bagi para peminat kajian media, ilmu komunikasi dan sosiologi untuk saling bertukar pikiran, berbagi pengetahuan serta gagasan dan tentu saja bersinergi demi kemajuan bidang yang diminati. Sehingga, tercipta kesempatan bagi siapa saja yang ingin belajar dan berbagi pengetahuan khususnya di bidang media, ilmu komunikasi dan sosiologi, karena kami percaya, ilmu dan pengetahuan akan bermanfaat lebih banyak apabila dibagi dan dikembangkan bersama orang lain.

Yogyakarta, 4 November 2015 Ranggabumi Nuswantoro, MA Koordinator COMICOS 2015



The Power to Change: A Lesson Learned from Comparative Research of Japan and Indonesian Youth Civic Participation in the Online Sphere

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Introduction

An interesting question appeared in a discussion of a group of students in the City of Yogyakarta, "Should we involve in politics? Do we really have power to change anything in the government for the better life of our society?" This question was addressed to me as a researcher who conduct series of FGD for young people, and as a lecturer in a based university. Surprisingly, the notion of power and change also appear in Japan, where I conduct the similar focus group discussion in universities around Kansai Area. "I don't think I have an important position in politics. Because there are so many steps before citizen's request comes true in politics." The issues of owning power to change something in politics become prominent in the discussion within young people who actively join offline organization to discuss about their political online participation. A lesson I learned from this is they (young people) want to participate as long as they have the ability and chances to "change" something.

The idea of participation especially in politics for young people creates many debates between scholars. Indeed, young people is the major demographic in online participation (Bennett and Segerberg, 2011), however they are also the most skeptical population about politics (Flanagin and Metzger, 2008). Politics is one of the most important elements of our civil society that will determine the destiny of a country. Therefore, many countries has many techniques to encourage their young generation to participate in politics for example in the general election and campaign time (Schelong, 2008). A reflective question to us, as the older generation to encourage our youth in politics is "What kind of democratic experiences would we choose for future generations?" (Bennett, 2008, p. 20) should be addressed through different circumstances. The theory-driven framework in the western countries offers a useful starting point in thinking about the scenario of the convergent technology and political practices to bring vibrant civic experiences to young people.

As a researcher, I choose two countries to understand the model of online civic participation. Indonesia has 41 million Indonesian Facebook users or 16,68% of Indonesian population are on Facebook (Jakarta Globe 2010). The Jakarta Globe (2010) also mentions that Indonesian Twitter users are also in the biggest six in the world. Indonesian young people actively involved in the political discussion, express their opinion related to citizenship activity, and join the political or social movements via Social Networking Sites (SNS) for example: Facebook, Twitter, Kaskus (Kasak Kusuk), and also the online forum such as Jakarta Post Forum, Detik Forum, etc. Japan, in the other hand, will also bring different backdrop of research's justifications. The government and political parties try to reach the young voters by following their civic and communication style. The population of young people in the online media has grown rapidly from 2.3 million users to 7.1 million users in two years (Kazuaki, 2008, p. 1). This growth, according to Schellong (2008), drives the government to go online through various tools in Japan such as Juki Net as the Basic Resident



Registers Network System, SNS, and other Government 2.0 platforms. Even political parties such as Liberal Democratic Party, New Party Nippon, and Social Democratic Party went online by uploading their own Youtube Channel (Kazuaki, 2008), websites, and interacted with citizens through discussion forum in Mixi (Alabaster, 2008), 2Chan (Matsumura, 2008), and Alexa (Farral, 2012). Both countries are relatively new in democracy, experiencing massive changes in the governments, political parties, penetration of technologies, and youth lifestyle. Both countries experience the similar struggles to understand the online civic participation among young people.

Theoritical Framework

Online Civic Practice as an Alternative for Urban Youth

Indonesia and Japan has a long history of a dictatorship and centralistic government. In both countries, it was better to stay silent about government mistakes rather than to speak up and disappear. For example, Masayuki Deguchi (1999, p. 11) and also supported by Shinichi Yoshida (1999, p. 7), they both argue that in the past, Japan has the traditional concept of "*deru ugi wa utareru*" (The nails that sticks out, gets hammered or those who fight against the authority will be in danger), or "*okami*" (the people who are above to point at the government). However started from after the World War II, the civil movement begin to raise. For example, the movement by Anpo opposition movement in 1960 that protested during the Anpo Treaty. In the digital media era, especially after the earth quake in Fukushima, people in Japan start to have civil and political participation through blogs, Twitter, and Youtube Video to tell the world about the crisis (Guskin, 2011). Not to mention, on September 19, 2011, a demonstration was held in Tokyo, gathering of 60.000 people through social media engineering and people movement (Nikkei Business Publishing, 2011). The young people mobilized primarily by social media and also endorsed by celebrity like Oe Kenzaburo and Sakamoto Ryuichi (Arevamirapal, 2011).

Similar stories raised from Indonesia, a country that started its' youth sacred pledge in 1928. This young generation is called the generation of 28. Indonesian independency from Japan occupation in 1945 was also inspired and mobilized by Rengas Dengklok young people and "Bung Karno" (Bung is a name called for young man). This was he generation who bring the darkness to light or famously called the age of motion from youn g people (Lee, 2011; Malik, 1968). In 1999, the new model of world citizen is awarded to youth civil movement to oppose the 32 years of dictatorship from Soeharto Presidential regime (Appadurai & Brckenridge, 1998 in Lee, 2011, p. 312). Recently, the democracy party for presidential election bring the high level of online civil participation for young people. Demonstrations, movements, public opinion were built mainly in online platform. The concept of engaging in social movement through online platform has been develop into level of competences. These competences involved the different commitment and level of participation in online media. The studies of youth civic participation in the field of communication requires some categories of political participation (Bennet, Wells, and Freelon, 2011, p. 839):

1. Knowledge to become effective citizen. The participation in knowledge aspect is related with the possession of information about history, constitution, the pioneers, war, the process of democratization and governance, candidate in the election, up to certain stance in specific political issues.



- 2. Skill for expression as a part of affective field e.g. discourse, cooperation, negotiation, persuasive ability, and the mastery of communication tools such as the ability to write articles as a form of expressing own self in the wider public context.
- 3. Join network and group skill as a part of psychomotor area i.e. how to organize political event, how to make a meeting, how to make consensus in a group, ability to lead, experience in community dynamics, and the comprehension about organization role.
- 4. Take action skill as a part of psychomotor area. In this phase, the organization/individual already reach the participation and engagement level e.g. voting, develop positive intention toward election, understand how to affiliate and support certain political party or social movement, know how to fund a campaign, and even become the one who is elected, join the protest in street, or make political graffiti.

Civil Society as the End Result of Online Civic Practice

The theoretical development of the political participation concept, especially in its relation with public participation in citizenship activity has changed historically: from the concept of civil society which is stated by Robert Putnam (1993), the social capital, until the construction of "democracy which works", started from the civil environment and organization adapt with the communication media (p. 6). The theoretical explanation is divided into three parts: started with the theoretical study about the development of youth organization relation of these youngsters with the online generation; ended by the discussion about the form of citizenship which is related with lifestyle and ways of communication which have been changed from time to time. This is the theoretical studies.

Citizen participation concept is developed from the concept of civil society with its own definition and function. In his book, Making Democray Work, Civic Tradition in Modern Italy, Robert Putnam (1993) brings the discussion to the intellectuals by asking and criticizing this concept of civil society. Civil society itself is the cornerstone for the construction of democracy as a result of the network of active local citizens (Mouritsen, 2003, p. 650). The interaction of these active citizens could produce social capital, which would help the formation of civil community. The social capital is an important part in civil society as a result of the political participation, the quality of government administration, the development of economy, productivity of population, and the responsive character of the government and social community. This community could escalate the interpersonal communication and the connectivity area for the civil society. Putnam (1993) emphasizes that connectivity area is shaped in the recreational sphere (15). There are indeed many critics about how this kind of community has a tendency to focus on social activity, makes it not political enough. In the other side, there are also many experts and researchers who mention the informal groups who are able to build trust and community, until the formation of the norm and habit provide bigger possibility for the formation of local network and public sphere (Habermas in Calhoun, 1999, p. 4).

The members of civil society who have included in civil organizations, whether they are recreational, non-formal, or have been developed into political organization, could develop better democracy. This civil society makes communities and public areas which consist of organization/institution models that support or even oppose the government (Mouritsen, 2003, p. 655). These local organizations could give contribution to society, or as stated by Putnam (in



Mouritsen, p. 654), *liberta commune* or "*liberty as common good*". The contribution could increase the element of freedom in the democratization process. Besides, the civil organizations could also increase the interaction of society, which result to the escalation of political competence, egalitarian perspective, the ability to compromise, and concern to the political figures from each member of the organization.

Methodology

As a researcher, I used a qualitative approach through Focus Group Discussion. I conducted sets of discussion with youth organizations in Japan and Indonesia. FGD can bring up a collective data in terms of similarity or diversity of habits, opinion, and experiences.

Indonesia

The participant of the FGD research is varied from student debating organization, student legislative organization, alumni of exchange program, and nationwide political youth organization. The geographical location of the FGD is between Jakarta and Yogyakarta. The researcher conducted 4 sessions in the city of Yogyakarta with 25 participants. While in Jakarta, the FGD was attended by 14 participants divided into 3 sessions. In total the participants in Indonesia were 39 people, who actively involved in youth organizations.

Japan

The participant of the FGD research in Japan is varied from English Club Organization, foreign language teaching assistant, member of global exchange student organization, workers union within alumni of exchange students, civic youth campus organization, political study class, and sport members organization. The geographical location of the FGD in Japan is within Osaka, Kyoto, and Okayama. The researcher conducted 4 sessions in Osaka with 11 participants, 1 session in Kyoto with 5 participants, and 1 session in Okayama with 4 participants. In total, the participants in Japan were 20 people who actively involved in youth organization, within or outside campus.

Result

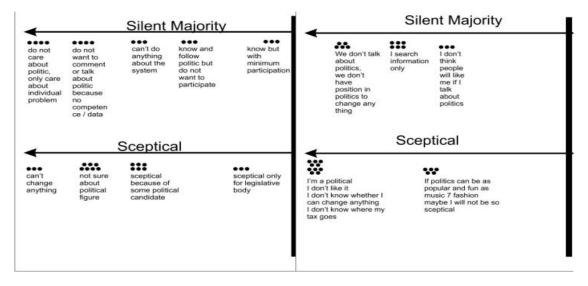
The Power to Change

My main curiosity towards youth political participation is on the notion from Andrew Flanagin and Miriam Metzger who argue that ironically young people is the most skeptic demographic group on the issue of democracy include politics and civic participation (p. 17). In the same time, online media offers the opportunity for the youth to involve in politics as good citizens by following their novel civic style in the web sphere, developing new platform of communication style, and engaging in online community (Woolley, Limperos, and Oliver, 2010, p. 631). The main question is why they become skeptical and silent? Indonesian and Japanese young people answer it pretty similarly. They see that they can't change anything. They also think that they have no power.

As an example, in my research in Indonesia, the young people keep mentioning their inability to change or their low contribution even if they participation in politics via online media. They said: I think I don't have any power to change anything in Indonesian political system. To comment about politics, I need to analyze the system or constitution. I feel that I don't have that competence." "I am usually silent in politics. However, I know what's going on in the daily news about politics. I got the information from my friends posting on Facebook about politics. I thank them for that so I don't need to read the news."



"I am just so little in the world of politics. What can I change? I'm aware that by voting I can do something. But is it true by my one vote I can change anything?" "I can be optimistic about politic if the figure is promising. But if the figure in politics is dumb and try to deceive the society, I will be really skeptic about the future of Indonesian politics.



The young people in both countries still consider the reason of incapability to change anything in politic and their low understanding in political system makes them skeptical about politics. Japanese participant: "I think I am skeptic. Because Japanese politics are not clear to citizen. I do not know what they are doing with taxes we pay." Indonesian participant: "I am just so little in the world of politics. What can I change? I'm aware that by voting I can do something. But is it true by my one vote I can change anything?" Other reason from Japanese is the boring politics makes them skeptical about politics "I wish politics can be as fun as music or fashion that popular among Japanese young people. I think I am skeptical about politics since it is not easy to understand Japanese politics and the situation is quite boring" While Indonesian participant is more on the figure, not the system "I can be optimistic about politic if the figure is promising. But if the figure in politics is dumb and try to deceive the society, I will be really skeptic about the future of Indonesian politics."

The young people who consider themselves as optimistic citizens in both countries cherish the democracy and freedom of expression as a capital for political participation. The pressure on the item in both democracy is varied between both countries. Indonesian participant: "*I am happy with the democracy and freedom in my country. Especially with the technological development that allow me to spread political information and opinion. Indonesians are tolerance to understand the diversity in our political position.*" Indonesian youth see technology and peaceful democracy as a capital of their optimistic state of mind. While Japanese participant appreciate more on the welfare or *prosperity of Japan as the capital for good politics, "At least I appreciate how politicians still try to sustain the welfare of the people in Japan. Many people see the good side of politics when they have a proper life."*

The young people in Indonesia have interest to participate in the Twitter media, Facebook, Youtube, and very low interest to check the government or political party website. In the other hand, the Japanese young people use government website as a source of information for their



political participation. Additionally, Japanese use Twitter, Facebook, and Mixi for their participation, and very low on Youtube.

There are several level of a civic and communication for Indonesian young people.

- a. Cognitive: in the level of cognitive, Indonesian and Japanese young people tend to update information, searching candidate background, and sharing information.
- b. Affective: in the affective level, Indonesian and Japanese young people tend to liking or have preference to certain political figure and opinion, they also create or share fun image or political statement
- c. Psychomotor: in the level of psychomotor, Indonesian and Japanese young people admit that sometimes they join online voting, movement/petition, and political party/figure in online media

Discussion

Campus organization, community, and extracurricular /club activity may be a way to start the conversation. This group of people may also interact in the online media, where the social capital is growing in the current fashion. Through online interaction, the response to government policy or political issue can be gained easily and citizen has access to connect with their community. However, as young people understand the consequences of technology to politics they are also have similar skepticism to their power as individual to change the situation. Participants from Japan and Indonesia are skeptical in similar issue, which is the idea of power. As the social capital grows, the question of whether individual has power to change any regulation or policy is also growing. Therefore, it is important for any political party or public figure in both countries to bring the issues of "man power" and "change" to convince the young people that their political participation can change something and they have a great power in politics. The importance of strengthening the social capital as a tangible power is needed to increase the optimism of the young people in Japan and Indonesia.

The result of the research also indicates cultural differences such as the different of how easy politics become a part of daily conversation in each country. Participants from Indonesia can easily posted political message on their Facebook page, or twitting about their condemnation of a bad political figure. Other than that, Indonesian young people are easy to search for information through viral conversation rather than obtain the information in the official website of the political figure or party or even the government. However, their counterpart in Japan simulates different culture. Japanese is not used to daily conversation about politics online. This condition strengthen the previous researcher discussion on the development of civic participation of "deru ugi wa utareru" (The nails that sticks out, gets hammered or those who fight against the authority will be in danger), or is still applicable in contemporary citizenship in the point of civic lifestyle is still not used to publish their political opinion in the daily online discussion (Degucci, 1999 and Yoshida, 1996). They also choose the formal and official media to search for information such as government website and political party's website. This finding shows different culture and communication style. In term of social capital both cultural and communication styles will result to different quality of government, responsive character of citizen and government, and the shape of mobility for social community (Mouritsen, 2003). There will be a need for further quantitative research in both



countries to determine the influence of degree of citizen participation to the quality of democracy and government.

The similarity on the participants' critique to their countries' politics regarding online political participation are the lack of information for politic, the low understanding of political logic for citizen, communication style, and political image by political figure. It is very important for Indonesian and Japanese government, political party, or figure to consider the public information to increase the well-informed citizen. Currently, both government in Japan and Indonesia are in in the right direction in "softening" and "lightening" the message and channel of political issue through Youtube channel, Social Media. On the other hand, the government in Japan and Indonesia need to maintain the development of technology and the progress of social welfare as both of these factors are part of the flourishing factor for youth online political participation.

Acknowledgement

Thank you for Sumitomo Foundation who funded this research in 2014-2015 Research Grant to compare the youth political participants in Japan and Indonesia. Thank you as well to lecturers and students in the universities around Kansai Area and Okayama to let the researcher discuss this data with their important informant. Thank you for Mr. Koichi Ishizuka for the full support for Sumitomo. Thank you to students and participants in Yogyakarta and Jakarta who are willing to discuss this issue in FGD. Finally, for research assistant: Bernadeta Agustina, Megya Rosetyana, Yohanita Rosdiana, big thanks to support this research.

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