HOW PEOPLE (DIS)CONNECT WITH THE PUBLIC ISSUES THROUGH CROSS MEDIA CONSUMPTION?

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ABSTRACT. Media have played a central role in developing the democracy. It expects to provide citizens with the space or sphere where issues of importance to a community are discussed and debated. It encourages deliberation and civic participation. Since the New Order regime (1966-1998) collapsed, the media system in Indonesia has not only experienced 'democratization, but has given way to increasing corporation and liberalization of media market. This condition has lead to media oligopoly and the concentration of ownership which endangered the process of democracy in Indonesia. Meanwhile, the advancement of digital technologies and converged platforms are making media more ubiquitous. They also offer opportunities to re-shape citizen media practices, especially in relation to the political and cultural spheres. The complexity of citizen-consumers' relation with the media and the ways in which the practices of media consumption may contribute to democratic condition in Indonesia. The objectives of this study aims to explore theoretical frame work how people are (dis)connected toward public concerns and how they develop skills to cope with the range of civic practices (from access to information and evaluation to deliberative process and civic engagement) as part of the role as a citizen. Moreover, this study investigates the ways in which media interact both in developing or undermining the civic practices.

KEYWORDS: Information repertoires; public connection; media practices; democracy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Media have played a central role in developing the democracy. They expected to provide citizens with the space or sphere where issues of importance to a community are discussed and debated, as well as essential information to encourage deliberation and civic participation is exchanged (Joseph, 2005; Schrøder & Steeg Larsen, 2010; Dahlgren, 2012). Therefore, citizens' access to the diverse information of public world and their ability to evaluate and cope with the public discourse is a pre-requisite in democratic society.

However, the capitalistic structure has made the media system moved in favour of the business interest rather than public interest (Curran, Lund, Iyengar, & Salovaara-Moring, 2009). Moreover, the growth of trans-national media conglomerates which leads to greater concentration of media ownership, the increasing flow of media outputs across platforms and the intensification of commercialization are among the central features that endangered citizen's right to get the diversity of information and the trustworthy one (Joseph, 2005). In one important study, Curran et al. (2009) tried to trace the connections between the architecture of media systems, the delivery of news and citizens' awareness of public affairs. This study revealed that there is ''a connection between patterns of news coverage and levels of public knowledge" (2009, p. 14), so that ''what the media report or fail to report affects what is known" (2009, p. 16). It implies that the concentration of ownership leads to biased political views, which in turn could threat the development of democratic process.

Meanwhile, the advancement of digital technologies and converged platforms offers tremendous opportunities to re-shape the media landscape, especially in the political and cultural spheres. Internet and new media technology has also entered a widened public arena which shifted media from one-way communication (that defined user as passive recipients) into a two-way interaction (whereby

users can interact with the information provider or among users). In the multi-media environment, it enables citizens' participation in acquiring, producing as well as distributing information.

Along with the advent of information and communication technology, the opinion toward complexity of audiences' relation with the media and the ways in which the practices of media consumption may contribute to democratic condition has been sharply divided between those excited by its potential to stimulate, engage, and integrate, and those fearful of its potential distract, disengage, fragment and polarize (Couldry, Livingstone, & Markham, 2007).

The changing media landscape has a huge impact on the ways in which people gain information and become engaged in public issues. With the proliferation of media outlets, information flows in abundance and constantly spread out through a numerous of channels. It leads to a situation in which the supply of information massively exceeds the available consumption time one has. Since the media providers compete to attract the users' attention, they apply the personalisation of information to save the users' time. This development, on one hand, allows citizen become well-informed about public issues than ever before (Negroponte, 1995) and obtain the possibility of finding information on even the most specialised topic (Tewksbury, 2005). On the other hand, they may turn only to sources that fit their predispositions (Pariser, 2011; Sunstein, 2009), or voluntarily to avoid public affairs information (Ksiazek, Malthouse, & Webster, 2010; Webster, 2005) and tune in to entertainment offerings instead (Prior, 2007). This development will make people can no longer connect sufficiently to form a shared public world. It is means that the convergent media consumption might contribute to public connection and disconnection as well, since it can either facilitate or distract people from issues of common concern that need to be addressed.

This study, therefore, neither aims to offer a groundbreaking conceptualisation in assuming the impact of media in democratic process nor defends a certain theory about it. Instead, this study aspires to understand how the Indonesian citizens are (dis)connected themselves to public concerns and how they develop skills to cope with those practices as part of the role as a citizen. At the same time, this study will describe in what ways media intersect in that process, without assuming them to be predominant in developing or undermining the civic practices. Some people might involve in public concerns and some of them might keeps away from it. I understand that media experience to be embedded in the rhythms of everyday live and it is rooted in the complex interplay of socio-economic background, internal and external factor of individual life.

2. INDONESIAN SOCIETY AND THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE

Indonesia is regarded as the third largest democracy in the world with a population around 259 million people. Although it is the world's most populous Muslim-majority country (87%), its Constitution guarantees freedom of religion. In terms of economics, Indonesia is South-East Asia's largest economy and one of only nine emerging economies among the G20 members.

The growth of the media industry in Indonesia, perhaps the case in other countries, has been driven by capital interest leading to a media oligopoly and the concentration of ownership. Since the New Order regime (1966-1998) collapsed, the political reform (or 'reformasi') in 1998 has brought enormous changes in the media landscape; from being heavily controlled by state as means for power to being highly profit-oriented and liberalised (Nugroho & Syarief, 2012). While the goal of this reform movement is to build a civil society and to create a more democratic media system, the real situation so far has been the liberalisation of the media market (Gazali, 2003).
Media convergence is clearly factor driving the conglomeration in Indonesia (Nugroho & Syarief, 2012). It can be clearly seen through synchronies several media platforms (broadcasting, online, print media) into one and combining them to external organizational entities. Thus, combining ownership of a variety of product platform (media organization with other product) leads to countless possibilities of converged advertising and marketing which in turn to formulaic production of content favoring the owners (Papacharissi, 2010)

Table 1
Top 12 Media Groups in Indonesia (2011)

No	Group	TV	Radio	Print Media	Online Media	Other businesses	Owner
1	Global Mediacomm (MNC)	20	22	7	1	Content Production, Content Distribution, Talent Management	Hary Tanoesoedibjo
2	Jawa Pos Group	20	n/a	171	1	Paper Mills, Printing Plants, Power Plant	Dahlan Iskan, Azrul Ananda
3	Kelompok Kompas Gramedia	10	12	89	2	Property, Bookstore chain, Manufacturing, Event Organiser, University	Jacob Oetama
4	Mahaka Media Group	2	19	5	n/a	Event Organiser, PR Consultant	Abdul Gani, Erick Thohir
5	Elang Mahkota Teknologi	3	n/a	n/a	1	Telecommunication and IT solutions	Sariatmaadja Family
6	CT Corp	2	n/a	n/a	1	Financial Services, Lifestyle and Entertainment, Natural resources, Property	Chairul Tanjung
7	Visi Media Asia	2	n/a	n/a	1	Natural resources, network provider, Property	Bakrie & Brothers
8	Media Group	1	n/a	3	n/a	Property (Hotel)	Surya Paloh
9	MRA Media	n/a	11	16	n/a	Retail, Property, Food & Beverage, Automotive	Adiguna Soetowo & Soetikno Soedarjo
10	Femina Group	n/a	2	14	n/a	Talent Agency, Publishing	Pia Alisjahbana
11	Tempo Inti Media	1	1	3	1	Documentary making	Yayasan Tempo
12	Beritasatu Media Holding	2	n/a	10	1	Property, health services, cable TV, Internet service provider, University	Lippo Group

Source: Nugroho et al. (2012: 39)

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Today, Indonesian media landscape is dominated by twelve large media groups that control nearly all of domestic media channels, including broadcasting, print media and online medias well (see Table 1) (Lim, 2011; Nugroho, Putri, & Laksmi, 2012). As a tool for gaining the power, the media suffered from an inevitable bias due to the deliberate interventions of media ownership particularly in creating and distributing the news to the audience (Nugroho et al., 2012)

3. MEDIA CONSUMPTION AND DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

In the middle of the commercialisation of mainstream media in Indonesia, digital media provide a new sphere where alternative content and information can be created and disseminated. The use of new media particularly social media has provided Indonesian society with new ways which make them becoming more conscious about public issues and contributed to the expansion and widening of civic public sphere in Indonesia - at least in the cyberspace (Lim, 2002).

The Internet and social media can potentially help to build public space and sphere for furthering democracy and freedom of speech in Indonesia. Some scholars has observed the various role of internet and social media in sustaining the democracy in Indonesia, ranging from participating in presidential election (Hill, 2003) to facilitating CSOs' works in rural development (Nugroho, 2008), to providing civil society's tool for social change (Nugroho, 2011) and to promoting the cyber-civic space for political activism (Lim, 2002). According to Lim (2003) the internet may have become a 'convivial medium' for civil society to foster democratization. Noticeably, the internet could also be utilized to initiate and perpetuate conflict. One example would be the use of the Internet in sharpening disintegration of the Ambon community, in the bloody conflict between Christians and Muslims (Hill & Sen, 2002).

However, according to Lim (2013, p. 653) there are very few causes that make for widespread activism in the vast online social media. She argues that the success of current mobilisation efforts often depend crucially on the type of its narrative. The cases will gain a higher chance to go viral and generate massive activism when the story is light package (a condition where content can be understood without deep reflection and spending too much time), headline appetite (information is needed a short attention span and one liner conversations) and trailer vision (a sensationalised story rather than a substantial one). Most importantly the information is congruent with the ideological meta-narratives, such as nationalism and religiosity. The cases are less likely success when the narrative is contested by dominant competing narratives generated in mainstream media (2013, p. 638).

Similarly, Suwana (2012) in her study concerning digital and media literacy among Indonesia youth in urban areas, indicates that there is a limited skill of young people to analyze and create content or information in online media particularly the issues associate with the political concerns. Moreover, Lim (2013) shows that the popular topics discussing in social media and blogosphere is mainly entertainment, lifestyle, and public figures, while political and public issues apparently have not take so much attention.

However, Gazali (2014) found that Indonesian activists are now keep working systematically and innovatively in the unique realms of social media. He argues that Indonesia activist may keep 'moving gradually but significantly towards a so-called 'social media democracy'. In term of presenting the public world, he found that Indonesian journalists in the media industry still feel that they should serve the common good. Especially when there are conflicting interests, media owners and journalists now fit relatively well into the 'collaboration orientation towards dialogue'.

3.1 Civic Culture

The concept of civic culture has been interested in the processes of how people develop into citizens and they come to see themselves as members and potential participants in societal development (Dahlgren, 2006; 2009; 2012). This concept relates citizens' political involvement and their uses of media – both the traditional and new media via information and communication technology. For instance, engaging with the news media and keeping up on the current affair can be viewed as an element of citizenship. Moreover, the activities of non-journalists using platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs to generate content and share journalistic material in order to make information gradually become more interactive, diverse, partisan, and immediate. Furthermore, the abundance and ubiquity of information on any given topic is reason of individuals' need to discuss it with other people through their on-line or direct interactions (see Dahlgren, 2009).

Adoni (2012) constructs a set of assumptions with regard to citizens' basic skills in developing democratic process. He argues that the increasing supply of informative content will supply citizens with the necessary material about what goes on socially, politically and culturally in society. In addition, people have opportunity to compare the discourse with different sources and receive the relevant as well as balanced information on different subjects. They will obtain 'extensive knowledge repertoires' to make sense the information offered by the media and discussed freely the discourse with their fellow citizens. Therefore, they will elaborate aesthetic repertoires that enable them to meet the social reality constructed by media with a critical distance before reaching the rational political decision and participating in the democratic public sphere. It can be concluded that the whole range of these activities reflect the basic skills which is necessary to foster the democratic culture in the society.

In relation to citizen-consumers paradigm, Henry Jenkins (2006), at the end of his book 'Cultural Convergence', stated that "users will be more powerful within convergence culture only if they recognize and use their power as both consumers and citizens to fully participate in the democratic

culture" (p.270). In his book he proposes the notions cultural shift which is based on the interaction between media convergence, participatory culture and collective intelligence. He argues that the technological abundance of information makes possible shifting behaviour of consumers and encourages them to seek out and compare information among the dispersed media contents, so that the process of convergence occurs also within the brains of individual consumers. These approaches would be applied in this research project.

3.2 Public Connection

This study bears some resemblance to the study Media Consumption and Public Engagement by Couldry et al. (2007), which asks the ways in which people talk about their use of the media in order to keep themselves informed about what is going on around them locally, nationally and internationally. Couldry et al. present public connection as being a bottom-line of all kinds of conceptions of democracy, ranging from liberal to communitarian, and from participatory to representative democracy (2007, pp. 8-14). The general definition suggests that public connection refers to the linkage between individuals and public world through shared "matters of common concerns". Public issues or 'common concerns' define as issues related to shred resources that need to be allocated and therefore demand for decision-making.

In this study, the authors propose two assumptions: firstly, 'as citizens, we share an orientation to a public world where matters of shared concerns are, or at least should be, addressed. The second assumption is that "public connection is principally sustained by a convergence in the media people consume" (Couldry, Livingstone, and Markham, 2007, p.3). Moreover, the authors define public connection as a basic orientation towards public issues, which in certain time, e.g. during the political turbulence or election, might be translate into attention and action.

The definition of what should counts as public issues are inherently contestable especially on the discourse of late modernity when the boundaries between the private and the public is blurred and fluid. However, Couldry et.al pragmatically argued that the idea that 'public issues' are distinguished from 'private issues' because they are issues of collective interest (about shared resources and our shared way of life) that require to be resolved collectively. On contrary, the private issues are dedicated to purely individual matters. Furthermore, Kaun (2012) suggest to redefine the notion of public connection, which remain to rather unclear how issues become common concerns (Fraser, 2002). Referring to Chantal Mouffe's conflict theory, she slightly alters the definition as an orientation toward space where common concerns are negotiated considering the orientation is nowadays often intermingled with media consumption, which is not only sustained but also diverted by the media in the form of institutions and social practices.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Currently, discussion about civic culture, public connection and media related experience revolve around the concept of mediatisation and mediation. These approaches aim to tackle the increasing importance of media for all kinds of political and social processes. While Silverstone's conceptualisation of mediation, stresses the ethical function of media in their ability to compress time and space and to overcome symbolic and physical distances, mediatisation is presented as a meta-process comparable to globalisation and individualisation (Krotz, 2009), as a moulding force (Hepp, 2010), and a result of growing institutionalisation and independence of the media (Hjarvard, 2013).

One major assumption of the mediatisation hypothesis is the degree to which media are moulded into all spheres of life has increased. According to mediatisation theory, media are not outside society, but part of its very social fabric. By using the framework of media repertoires perspective (Hasebrink & Popp, 2006), it takes the stance of the active audience and its individual composition of many media contacts, including a variety of different media and content which is embedded in their everyday life. This approach assumes that audience do not simply receive, store, and process what the media offers, rather they actively select, interpret, and use what is offers.

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