Introduction to the Special Issue on
Social Implications of the ICTs in the Indonesian Context

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INFORMATION and communication technologies (ICTs), especially the internet, have become a ubiquitous part of people's lives all over the world, including in Indonesia. Three decades since the internet was introduced to Indonesia via the first international connection made by the University of Indonesia in Jakarta (Lim, 2003:117), the number of Indonesian internet users has reached 39.6 million or approximately 16.1% of total population (Internet World Stats, 2011). That makes Indonesia one of 20 countries with the highest number of internet users. The more stunning fact comes from the usage of social media in the country. In 2011, there are around five million bloggers populated the Indonesian blogosphere. By December 2011, there are 41.7 million Facebook users in Indonesia, making it the second largest nation on Facebook after the United States (Socialbakers, 2011). In addition, the April 2011 data from Comscore (2011) reported that at 22% Indonesia ranks fourth of its Twitter population, behind the Netherlands, Japan and Brazil.

The growing use of the internet, including social media, has not only implicated the ways Indonesians communicate, but also influenced the ways they connect to each other. With the developments of social media such as blogs, wikis, collaborative websites and other social networking tools to fulfill the personal, organizational, societal and political goals, and to influence the ways individuals work and live, it is important to understand the implications it brings. What is central here is the needs for a critical examination of the assumptions behind the internet adoption in Indonesia and the ways in which these impact, and are impacted by, the societal development. While innovations in internet technologies and social media have perhaps given new impetus for the reinvention of many activism in many fronts (i.e. government, business, and civil society organizations), more than often, not all of these technological adoption processes are deliberate and strategically designed by the users.

Similarly, equal access to telecommunication infrastructure cannot be assumed as granted: digital divide (Norris, 2001) is real, particularly in developing worlds like Indonesia. Moreover, mobile and cable broadband penetration has been claimed to have bridged the divide (e.g. Roux, 2011) but most of its development simply follows the 'market logic' rather than its 'universal service obligation' (e.g. Rauen et al., 2011), leaving many deprived areas unconnected, as is the case in Indonesia. In contexts like these, Morozov's warnings (2011) on the over-exaggerated role of digital technology, particularly social media in social change, despite sounds too dystopian, are worth noting. We should always be critical to the notion of the internet being perceived as a causal agent having a pivotal role in social change. Echoing Lim and Kann (2008), we perceive the internet, as a technological artefact, as "both constituted by society and constituting society" (83). The impact and outcomes of the internet as well as its inherent limits and possibilities are, thus, constructed by "social arrangements and contexts around the technology" (Lim & Kann, 2008:83). We also note, not only is the adoption and use of the Internet and social media never straightforward, its integration into many organisational strategies often becomes problematic (for an example of internet adoption in civil society organizations (CSOs), see Nugroho, 2011).

However, despite the exponential growth of the internet usage and the abovementioned challenges, scholarly work focusing on the relationship between the internet and society in Indonesia is still a rarity. As a research domain, the Indonesian internet study only started about one and half decade ago. The first known scholarly work in the field is Hill and Sen's (1997) preliminary survey of the internet's democratizing potential in Indonesian politics. With their study on the politics and culture of Indonesian cybercafe or warnet in Yogyakarta, Hill & Sen (1997) opened up a new terrain for exploration. Since then, a handful of scholars have emerged as the first generation of researchers who have conducted in-depth research in various social, political, and cultural aspects of the internet. Such research is exemplified by scholarly work on: the relationship between the internet and democracy (Hill & Sen, 2000; 2005; Lim, 2003; 2004a; 2006), roles of the internet in conflicts and in shaping collective identity (Hill, 2002; Brauchler, 2003; 2004; Lim, 2004b; 2005; 2011), online election (Hill, 2003), CSOs' use of the technology (Nugroho, 2008; 2010a; 2010b; 2011; Nugroho and Tampubolon, 2008), urban spatiality of the internet development (Lim, 2002), internet adoption in educational institution (Kuntoro & Al-Hawamdeh, 2003; Thompson, 2004), e-government (Furuholt & Wahid, 2008), politics and culture of the blogosphere (Lim, 2009), and socio-economic aspect of the internet access (cybercafe or *warnet*) (Kristiansen et al, 2003; Wahid et al, 2006), among others. While these works can be considered as pioneering, certainly there are many other unexplored terrains in this novel field of study.

This special issue aims to enrich the intellectual discussions much needed in the field. Five articles showcased here look at a wide variety of the uses of online media technologies and

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platforms and what implications these uses have on people, organizations and society in the Indonesian context as the technology becomes more widely available. This issue also includes works that look at the other side of the coin, those who focus on the cultural, social and political shaping of the technologies by Indonesian society. We briefly introduce them in turn.

In the first article, Tiastuti and Rakhmani investigate the relationship between Indonesia blogging culture and primordialism. Providing a rich analysis of the Indonesian blogosphere, these authors argue that in this new sphere nationality is shaped by old languages but mediated through new models. Further, they argue that the blogosphere emerges as a network that facilitates ethno-symbolism where the trace of ideological hegemony of nationalist ideology merges with the ethnic sentiment. Following this, in a comprehensive study of the broadband access in the country, the second article by Rohman and Bohlin attempts to identify the demand and supply factors that determine mobile broadband access. Findings from this study show that geographical characteristics play more important role than income in developing the broadband access.

In the third article, Wayansari provides an interesting exploration of the role of Web 2.0 based websites in influencing politics in Indonesia's new democracy. Through the case of Politikana.com, Wayansari demonstrates that user-generated content platforms can potentially contribute to the widening of online public sphere by providing an "associational space" for rational and critical discourse. Widodo's study of use of the Internet for public participatory democracy by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in the fourth article, argues along the same line. The author demonstrates that citizen journalism or community-based journalism is an effective medium to develop participatory democracy. His findings, however, show that while there is a mutual relationship between internal and external use of the internet by NGOs, the advancement in workplace participatory democracy does not directly correlate with public participatory. Finally, Dewi shares her research on the application of local e-government in rural areas. Using the case of Terong village, the author demonstrates that the successful development of community based e-government in bureaucratic reform is determined not only by the application of the e-government system itself, but also influenced by the media convergence and structural factors such as strong leadership and good governance from the related local government.

These articles sit nicely together and are complementary to each other. Through their cases, studies, analysis, and theorization, contributors of this issue together have contributed to a broader understanding of how the internet and society have mutually shaped each other and theoretical considerations of the links between social implications and the internet. It is our honor to edit such a collection. As editors, we are also proud to pronounce that the contributors are, predominantly, young Indonesian scholars who never published in peer-reviewed outlet before. We sincerely hope that the launch of this special issue marks a significant milestone, not only for these young scholars, but also for the advancement of the Indonesian internet study.

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