

11-1-2019

Indonesian Blogger Communities: Display of Digital Artefacts As The Legitimate Ruling Mechanism

Endah Triastuti

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarhub.ui.ac.id/jkmi>



Part of the [Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Ethnicity in Communication Commons](#), [International and Intercultural Communication Commons](#), and the [Social Influence and Political Communication Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Triastuti, Endah (2019) "Indonesian Blogger Communities: Display of Digital Artefacts As The Legitimate Ruling Mechanism," *Jurnal Komunikasi Indonesia*: Vol. 8: No. 3, Article 3.

DOI: 10.7454/jki.v8i3.11839

Available at: <https://scholarhub.ui.ac.id/jkmi/vol8/iss3/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences at UI Scholars Hub. It has been accepted for inclusion in Jurnal Komunikasi Indonesia by an authorized editor of UI Scholars Hub.

Indonesian Blogger Communities: Display of Digital Artefacts as The Legitimate Ruling Mechanism

Endah Triastuti

Abstrak/Abstract

Makalah ini membahas pertanyaan seputar ‘Apakah komunitas blogger yang direartikulasikan dari ‘hubungan hegemonik konservatif’ memiliki potensi untuk memberdayakan blogger Indonesia?’ Atau apakah berpotensi mereproduksi bentuk lain dari hubungan kekuasaan untuk blogger Indonesia, seperti dunia maya yang tidak selalu menjamin demokratisasi. Hal ini berkisar pada gagasan tentang komunitas, dimana era digital telah mengubah hubungan kekuasaan. Terdapat argumen bahwa apa yang disebut komunitas virtual cenderung mereproduksi mekanisme yang berkuasa dengan menciptakan kembali artefak digital sebagai pengingat untuk mempertahankan wilayah budaya. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian etnografi tentang blogging dan mencakup hampir empat tahun pengamatan partisipan dan wawancara informal dengan beragam blogger termasuk pria, wanita, pengadopsi awal dan pendatang baru, pendiri, administrator, orang-orang yang menulis blog secara profesional dan mereka yang menulis blog di waktu luang. Temuan saya menunjukkan bahwa budaya blogging Indonesia tidak merujuk pada ‘komunitas modern’. Budaya blogging orang Indonesia tetap mempraktikkan bahasa-bahasa kuno primordialisme tetapi dimediasi melalui model-model baru. Komunitas Blogger di Indonesia mencerminkan transaksi unik antara civitas dan polis. Di satu sisi mereka siap membangun identitas mereka sebagai anggota masyarakat (komunitas) tetapi di sisi lain, banyak juga yang mengembangkan identitas mereka sebagai anggota polis (masyarakat) dengan membangun artefak digital. Selain itu, praktik-praktik ini membutuhkan keanggotaan yang sangat melekat pada daerah dan wilayah.

This paper discusses questions around ‘Do blogger communities that are rearticulated from ‘old school hegemonic relations’ have the potential to empower Indonesian bloggers?’ Or do they, on the other hand, potentially reproduce other forms of power relationships for Indonesian bloggers, as cyberspace does not always guarantee democratisation. It revolves around the notion of community, which in digital era has decentred power relations. It offers an argument that what so called virtual community tends to reproduce ruling mechanism by recreating digital artefacts as trivial reminders to maintain cultural territories. This study is an ethnographic research on blogging and includes almost four years of participant observation and informal interviews with a diverse range of bloggers including men, women, early adopters and newcomers, founder, administrator, people who blog professionally and those who do so in their free time. My findings show that Indonesian blogging culture does not refer to a ‘modern community’. It remains practicing old languages of primordialism but mediated through new models. Blogger communities in Indonesia reflect a unique transaction between civitas and polis. On one hand they readily establish their identity as members of civitas (communities) but on the other hand, many also develop their identity as members of polis (society) by establishing digital artefacts. Additionally, these practices require memberships which are strongly attached to localities and territories.

Kata kunci/Keywords:

Etnografi digital, blog, komunitas virtual, Indonesia, nasionalisme

Digital ethnography, blog, virtual community, Indonesia, nationalism

*Department of Communication Science,
Universitas Indonesia
Email: dek.titut@gmail.com*

Introduction

It starts when I attended the first Indonesia Blogger Fest in 2007 and experienced that the majority of Indonesian bloggers were part of particular blogger communities based on shared parochial associations, referring to ethno-communal associations. Considering the utopian assumption that the blogosphere is borderless, Indonesian blogger communities recall the pre-existing concepts of ‘community’ and rearticulate traditional parochial structures.¹

My discussion in this study responds to scholars’ arguments that virtual communities emerg-

ing from social media, including blogs, decenter the domination of power relationships (Fuchs, 2011, p. 134-135; Castells in Bell, 2006, p. 66; Castells, 2002, p. 170; Boyd, 2006), which my observations suggest is not the case in Indonesian blogger communities (Maltz, 1996; Barzilai-Nahon and Neumann, 2005). This phenomenon begs the question: 'Do blogger communities that are rearticulated from 'old school hegemonic relations' have the potential to empower Indonesian bloggers?' (Blood, 2002; Blood, 2004b; Herring et al., 2004). Or do they, on the other hand, potentially reproduce other forms of power relationships for Indonesian bloggers, as argued by scholars such as Nakamura (2002), who believe that cyberspace does not guarantee democratisation.²

In line with scholarly arguments that there is a supplemental or complementary relationship between individuals' online and offline environments (e.g. Baym, 2000; Nardi, 2005), I will examine how regardless their online activities, Indonesian blogger communities tend to continue older power relationships by imitating perpetuate traditional administrative systems, which are strongly attached to the traditional conception of 'nationality'. It reproduces cultural artifacts in cyberspace, which confirms a strong association with Indonesia national heritage. For this purpose I will draw on Bhabha to argue that the power narratives within Indonesian blogger communities are contested and liminal (2004). According to him, the production of power is a precarious process that is an opening for agency. Thus it is important to examine the relations between the notions of 'community' alongside the notion of 'nationalism', and how national heritage is brought into digital memories in the forms of digital artifacts thus members of community may conceive of themselves as a coherent community.

Theoretical framework

There are contested arguments in outlining the notion of community. Pre digital scholars stresses geographically bordered area as a context for people's face to face interaction (Galpin, 1915) and thus rejects the idea of online community because of the lack of bodily engagement in real environments (Weinreich, 1997). Cyber-utopianists focus on how virtual community contributes member generated content for members (Jones, 1997). Cyberculture theorists emphasizes on intense and deeply engaged computer-mediated communication, where through information exchange members cultivate trust and emotional bonds that lead them to various personal communications (Rheingold, 2000; Baym, 2000; Baym, 2002; Nardi, 2010). There is a similarly contested discourse in discussion of blogging as formative of online communities. Scholars such as Ondrejka refute the idea of community development in blogging, pointing to its asynchronous communication character (2007 in Rettberg, 2008, p. 64). Another view such as Ritter's, points to a blog's lack of capacity to establish identities and thus establish 'community'

(2007). In contrast, some scholars view blogging as formative of online communities by focusing on networks established within blogging based on information sharing through links and comments (Jackson et al., 2007; Blood, 2002; Blood, 2004a; Ali-Hasan and Adamic; 2007). For this reason, Rettberg (2008) argues that there is a distributed community within blogging, where locality or territory is almost not an issue.³ Several scholars add that after trust and emotional bonds are shaped, blogging as practice enhances complementary relationships between offline and online circumstances (Nardi and Gumbrecht., 2004; Wei, 2004) and promote the growth of community that goes beyond the online sphere.

Thus it is important to examine the relations between the notions of 'community' alongside the notion of 'nationalism'. According to Anderson, geographical consciousness is a cultural artefact that is rooted in the *image* of communion, although community 'members' will never meet or know their fellow members (Anderson, 1983, p. 5-7). Taking up Benedict Anderson's argument on imagined community, Billig introduces the term 'banal nationalism' to describe everyday ideological practices which are designed to reproduce national identity (1995, p. 6). According to Billig, political power holders create 'trivial reminders' in forms of embodied habits of social life that take place in 'so many little ways' that mostly go unnoticed, and thus are not 'consciously registered as reminding' (p. 8).

The construction of Indonesia's nationhood through banal cultural reminders has taken various forms various artefacts of nationhood, that are political tools to wave nationhood flags on one hand, and as the unwaved national flags (Billig, 1995, p.42-43). These artefacts of nationhood take various forms of cultural artefacts, ranging from daily television programs (see for example Kitley, 2003),⁴ military programs (e.g. AMD, ABRI Masuk Desa – The military enters the villages),⁵ Indonesian language, routine Monday flag ceremonies in state schools, the national days that used to be part of the New Order's routines and education institutions, singing the national anthem, and museums. One of the famous museums in Indonesia to express the mental and physical construct of nationhood is Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (TMII).

TMII was part of the former Suharto and his wife Mrs. Tien's political plan to promote a sense of nationalism. As an icon of nationhood, TMII displays a unique national culture of a harmonious life within a country with great local ethnic diversity (Hitchcock, 2005, p. 47-50; Zilberg, 2010, p. 555).⁶ It represented the state's attempt to eliminate bonds to prior traditional communities and enable the state to impose new loyalties to the nation through shared attributes and experiences (Billig, 1995). According to Lim, the state carried out these attempts through repressive control and gave no choice but to practice

them to avoid both legal and social punishments. These disciplines are necessary for two reasons. As Indonesia is an archipelagic country, location has historically created a sense of place and affiliation, and thus a sentiment of the “insider” and “outsider” (see for example Snow, 2002). For this reason, Indonesia has been afflicted by separatism throughout its history (Gayatri, 2010; Aspinall, 2011), which have threatened national unity (Bertrand, 2004, p. 91). Primordial sentiment rooted in economic inequalities between the central and the periphery (Gayatri, 2010; Vaughn, 2010; Geertz, 1973), and between migrants and local residents, and religious differences have threatened national unity (Bertrand, 2004, p. 91). The Indonesian government’s efforts in building a sense of nationalism through various national icons and discipline illustrates that identity is socially constructed and not fixed (Gillespie, 1995; Snow, 2002; Liebes et al., 1998).

During Suharto’s regime, the state socially constructed the family as a representative of the nation in smaller scale (Schmidt, 2012). Result announcing his role as ‘bapak bangsa’ (father), Suharto privileged fraternal relationships that have no desire for power but for family bonds. Understood within the national discourse, people were believed to join the national community with consent, and thus consciously gave up part of their power, because some people within a community are seen as having more power than others (Tönnies and Harris, 2001, p. 24-27, 28-35).

With regards to Tönnies’ argument on social relationships within community, I consider by joining an Indonesian blogger community, people face a number of problems in having free agency. The fact that the majority of regional blogger communities in Indonesia are administered by authorized members, who hold more power than others, recalls arguments that even though cyberspace is expected to deliver users ‘freedom’, it still leaves a potential space for uneven power discourse.

Methodology

My study is part of my ethnographic research on blogging. It includes almost four years of participant observation and informal interviews and ten months of formal interviews (October 2009 – February 2010; and July 2012 – November 2012). During four years of observation and informal interviews, I applied for a membership in a number of Indonesia blogger communities. I have become an online formal member of five blogger communities (Batam Blogger Community, Bali Blogger Community, Aceh Blogger Community, Loenpia Semarang, Anging Mammiri) and a lurker of two blogger communities (Komunitas Blogger Bengawan and Wong Kito). I have rejected by Wong Kito blogger community (Palembang) and Cah Andong blogger community (Jogjakarta). The reason of both rejections were similar that did not

have a chance to establish ‘social bond’ with them. By being a member, my position as an insider has given me greater access to bloggers and data about blogging. In contrast the fact that my membership application was rejected by a number of blogger communities has restrained me from access to bloggers regardless that I still can access their blogs.

My interactions with members from each blogger community were established in community’s mailing lists, comment feature in blogs and face to face conversation in a number of offline gatherings. In this study I applied the method of observation as systematic attempts to understand the nature of each blogging community. At the same time, I also engaged in hundreds of informal discussions in mostly recorded setting with a diverse range of bloggers including men, women, early adopters and newcomers, founder, administrator, people who blog professionally and those who do so in their free time.

Indonesian blogger communities: the legitimate ruling mechanism through comradeship

The rising popularity of blogging led to the first Blogger Fest in October 2007 in Jakarta,⁷ and I was present there. Alone,⁸ I was sitting in an upper row of chairs and it was fascinating and enjoyable to observe how people, who have otherwise interacted in a mediated space, met each other physically and the Blogger Fest accommodated this ‘crossing-over’. The Master of Ceremony introduced these community groups as Blogger Bali, Blogger Bunderan HI, Blogger Angin Mammiri, Blogger Bandung, and so forth. Each group demonstrated a unique collective identity through displays of collective emblems such as community t-shirts and by performing group chants using their local vernacular. It was extremely surprising to see how intimate and familiar they were with each other, given that their relationship had grown from prior exchanges in the blogosphere.

I have come to know that that the majority of blogger communities name their communities according to their *pre-existing* geographical or administrative regions such as Bali Blogger Community (BBC), Aceh Blogger Community (ABC), and Bogor Blogger Community. Some of them have unique names that are emblematic of pre-existing places, cities and cultural icons. Some examples of this are Wong Kito⁹ (WK, Palembang), Kayuh Baimbay¹⁰ (KB, Banjarmasin), Loenpia¹¹ Semarang (LS), and Anging Mammiri¹² (AM, Makassar), which refer to cultural icons that are rooted in local mottos of societies in Palembang, Banjarmasin and Makassar. Names such as Cah Andong¹³ (CA, Yogyakarta), Bundaran Hotel Indonesia¹⁴ (BHI, Jakarta), and Tugu Pahlawan¹⁵ (Surabaya) are also emblematic of places and cities.

Just as the names of the communities follows precedents that precede the digital world, so called ‘blogger communities’. It perpetuates traditional administrative systems that relate back

to establishment charters or agreements that later members have to fit in with. Potential members are subject to sets of pre-membership regulations, some of which are strongly attached to ‘sense of place’ (see e.g. Jones, 1998; Rheingold, 2000). The Wong Kito blogger community, for instance, requires members to have permanent or at least long-term residence in Palembang. It indicates that Indonesian blogger communities are not aspatial (see e.g. Ludlow, 1996; Turkle, 1995). The Cah Andong and Bundaran Hotel Indonesia blogger communities, for example, highly recommend face-to-face meeting before membership. Thus, instead of ‘gradually emerging’ from online interactions, Indonesian blogger communities rearticulate pre-existing concepts of ‘traditional community’ by imposing bodily commitment, emphasising ties of kinship and place and requirement great significant of physical meeting to secure social bond (Day; 2006, Masolo; 2002). Additionally, this requirement of offline meetings indirectly implies an expectation of territorial closeness.¹⁶ In that respect, Indonesian bloggers’ idea of community leads to the question of whether social relationships within Indonesian regional blogger communities are emergent as a result of reciprocity and interdependence between bloggers (Doueihi, 2011, p. 55), or are mechanical constructions existing in their mind as a result of an imagined community that is rooted in fraternal relationships (Tönnies and Harris, 2001, p. 17).

In contrast to scholars who argue that it is *modern* communities that dwell in cyberspace, where material space lose its barriers (e.g. McLuhan and Powers, 1989; Castells, 1996), Indonesian blogger communities illustrate an instinctive drive to bring forward the sustaining of “territorial borders” in their minds within the context of ‘modern communities’. The Aceh Blogger Community and the Batam Blogger Community, for example, require their potential members to have at least one active blog account, to join their mailing list¹⁷ and to place community badges on their blogs. Several blogger communities require additional conditions, which strongly reflect the aim to cultivate a collective identity: applicants must be born/live in the same city/province and/

or come from a similar ethnic background.¹⁸

This administered affective bond has, however, formed community formation that are can be traced through self-identification as a member of a particular community (Anderson, 1983; Etzioni, 2015). In blog posts, Indonesian bloggers express their self-belonging to a particular community. This self-identification can be seen as a commitment to shared values and as giving members of community a cultural context (Masolo, 2002). A blogger from Bali, SweetRabit, during 10 months, posted following the themes on the blog:

Table 1 illustrates that 43.75% of SweetRabit’s total posts within 10 months were about community activities, and 56.25% of the rest of the post were about four others topic, which are less than 20% of every topic.

Table 1 1 Frequency of posts on selected topics

Topics	Frequency	%
Blogging	3	18.75
Community	7	43.75
Hobby	3	18.75
Family	1	6.25
Personal	2	12.5
Total	16	100

Table 2 shows examples of authors’ nomination of their identity as members of particular blogger communities. From these exchanges it is clear that joining a blogger community has an impact on Indonesian bloggers’ posts. The posts do not portray community sense in a limited sense, they also signal that Indonesian bloggers become linked up with others and seemingly readily adopt ready-made identities in their posts. To put differently, each member of blogger communities and their host community are related in a constant dependency (Masolo, 2002), which create the complete connectivity in blogging activity.

Furthermore, the notion of complete connectivity in blogging activity suggests a strong interplay between cyberspace and physical space (‘real’ life). The Indonesian blogosphere goes beyond even this ground breaking notion of blogging activity: Indo-

Table 2 Typical nomination of community identity observed among a selection of posts

Community	N	Content example
Palembang (Wong Kito)	14	“Thank you for my community, Wong Kito, who sent me to attend this event”
Makassar (Anging Mammiri)	18	“This month I met my Anging Mammiri friends who live in Jakarta several times.”
Aceh (Aceh Blogger Community)	5	“Happy 3 rd birthday for Aceh Blogger Community”
Bali (Bali Blogger Community)	10	Hmmm it’s been three years already since I join this blogger community (Bali Blogger Community)
Kalimantan (Kayu Baimbay)	0	
Java (Loenpia Semarang)	9	“Thanks to : Afiq, Hyudee, Danindra, Mauren,Leidena, and other bakers who always help every RoTIFreSh event.”
Jakarta (Bunderan Hotel Indonesia)	1	“This social event was initiated by my community, Bunderan Hotel Indonesia”

nesian bloggers from a shared ethnic and/or territorial background integrate with the same blogger community and name themselves after their ethnicity or region. Blogging practices in Indonesia have literally and figuratively become an extension of the existing and emerging forms of identity and identification between bloggers and, through a 'bouncing back', or 'derestriction' between the online and the offline gathering, vice versa.

In 2010 I applied to be a member of Wong Kito (Palembang). Communicating online with the administrator, I was rejected because she considered I did not have a chance to establish 'social bond' with Wong Kito (instant messenger chat on September 30, 2010 with Journalnya Nike). Other blogger communities such as Cah Andong and Bunderan HI communities are considered very exclusive among Indonesian blogger communities. They demand a particular number of offline gatherings before accepting a blogger as their member (personal interview with Escoret, a member of Cah Andong on January 19, 2009). Even more, to illustrate the exclusivity of Cah Andong, membership is not automatically granted after a number of meetings until the sense 'of trust' has had time to be established (personal interview with Momon on January 20, 2009).¹⁹

According to Dicks, community put a tag of social ties through cultural artefacts, which on one level members can define themselves and on another level community can be simulated and members can ensure their own traditions continue (Dicks, 2004). It is evident in my study that Indonesia blogger communities create digital artefacts to represent cultural values, community's identities and means to linking people, namely: communities' blogs and Wikis, communities' mailing lists, offline gatherings, and official community's Twitter and Facebook accounts.

Communities' blogs and Wikis.

My study finds that every Indonesian blogger community maintains a community blog to give people details of official information about the community. These communities' blogs are run by administrators. The majority of the administrators are men, mostly senior members, or 'the founding fathers'. Thus, it stands to reason that they initially determined membership requirements. These administrators tend to be people with good technology skills and work in IT companies. From my conversation with several Indonesian male bloggers who are also administrators, their technical skills are needed to solve blog's technical problems.

To create a sense of community, members are welcomed to author posts about local or community issues in community blogs. Thus, community blogs are set for 'multiple users' and personal passwords provided by the administrators. After an offline event, administrators will usually ask who will report and post the event on community's blog.

In addition, a number of blogger communities such as Cah Andong, Loenpia Semarang, Wong Kito and Aceh Blogger Communities author community Wikis to provide members with information about rituals and traditions within the communities that new member can learn from. Cah Andong, for example, provides entries that contain community jargon that is commonly used by members. Wong Kito has a similar entry that provides their new members with rules and jargon (such as 'pecah telok' (hatching the eggs) in their wiki.

Communities' mailing lists.

My observation reveals that the real sense of community is formed through informal communication on daily basis in communities' mailing lists (see Figure 1, an example of a mailing list's threads). Mailing lists are a medium to share information (ranging from jobs, vacations, properties, herbal remedies, blog competitions, new technology and gadgets and new movies), to arrange offline gatherings, to play (quiz, and cross words). Mailing lists are the prime media for a blogger to communicate with other members within a community. New members are welcome to join communities' mailing lists, and introduce themselves by creating one 'hello' thread. Some blogger communities such as Tugu Pahlawan Community (Surabaya), Blogger Ngalam (Malang), Bali Blogger Community, Loenpia Semarang, and Wong Kito have a formal template for an introductions thread.²⁰

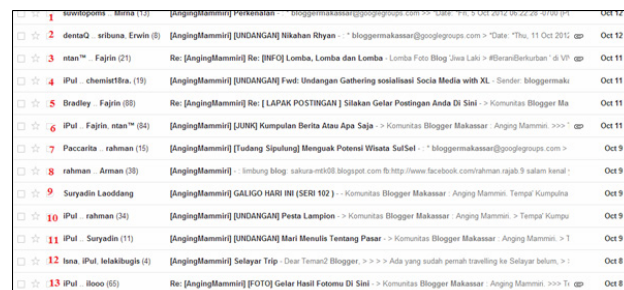


Figure 1. Anging Mammiri (Makassar) mailing list threads

Wong Kito, the strictest one in this matter, names its introduction thread as a kind of 'Pecah Telok' (hatching the egg) ritual, an initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into Wong Kito. Referring to the description on Wong Kito's wiki and blog, Pecah Telok takes the form of hazing that involves humiliation and subordination. A new member is required to introduce themselves in a mailing list thread in a unique way.

The administrator posted an intimidating suggestion for potential members: 'Think carefully before you join. Batten down the hatches' (PIKIR DULU SEBELUM JOIN. SIAPKAN MENTAL). Additionally, it states senior members are entitled to verbally insult and humiliate potential members' introduction thread as a sign that they are granted a membership (see Figure 2).

These odd little rituals relate to my argument in the next section about men bloggers' domination within communities. The Pecah Telok ritual is strongly associated with masculinity as it is mostly men who set the community rules. Significantly perhaps, this ritual is adapted from traditional wedding rituals, and strengthens ideas of members' commitment, clan or family association and dependency evident in traditional patriarchal marriage relations throughout the archipelago. Considering theoretical assumptions of 'borderless' cyberspace, we can also understand these entry requirements as a way of containing practices and members within an otherwise un-ordered space (Honeycutt, 2005).



Figure 2. Wong Kito's regulation on the community blog

I also found that interactions within mailing lists are likely to be in local dialect, although the use of gaul (slang) language, Indonesian language and English is also common. This is a reason why I can hardly establish a bond with members from the Aceh Blogger Community, Anging Mammiri, and Kayu Baimbay. My ethnic background as a Javanese descendant creates barriers in mingling closely with other members online. In this case, my study shows that the informal nature of the vernacular serves to create intimacy between members in communities' mailing lists.

Kopdar – KOPI DARat: offline gatherings

Another important practice to strengthen social relations within blogger communities is the physical meet and greet known as KOPDAR²¹ (KOPI DARat, a get together or meeting 'on land'). When I started my research in 2008, several blogger communities required me to attend *kopdar* before joining as a member. Figure 3, for example, is a screenshot of the Cah Andong community that states 'you are required to attend face-to-face meeting before becoming a member (yang ingin bergabung diharapkan untuk kopdar terlebih dahulu)'. It illustrates that the *kopdar* not only plays a role in introducing a new member to other members in person²² but also has a function to strengthen social bonds and the privilege of being "completely connected" with communities.²³ Furthermore, it points to the engagement between blogger communities beyond the blog itself.



Figure 3 Cah Andong's requirements for regular offline gathering on the community's blog

Despite early scholarly views that the sense of community within blogs can be traced from blog contents in the form of links and comments, the *kopdar* tradition illustrates otherwise. *Kopdar* suggests that blogging practice includes not only online interactions but also face-to-face networked activity, where members cultivate relationships through 'beer and gear' (Nardi, 2005). Additionally, it resembles the requirement during the New Order for newcomers moving into a neighbourhood to report to the head of the local neighbourhood organisation (RT and RW).²⁴ We can understand the requirement of *kopdar* in the same way: face-to-face meetings institute a system of personal surveillance that requires members, as blogger community 'citizens', to report personally to the authority in the blogger community so they can control the verifiability of community members.²⁵ This requirement, which puts a premium on an individual's 'real' identity as it were, is apparently hostile to the notion that on the web, you can be 'anyone you like' (Turkle, 1995).

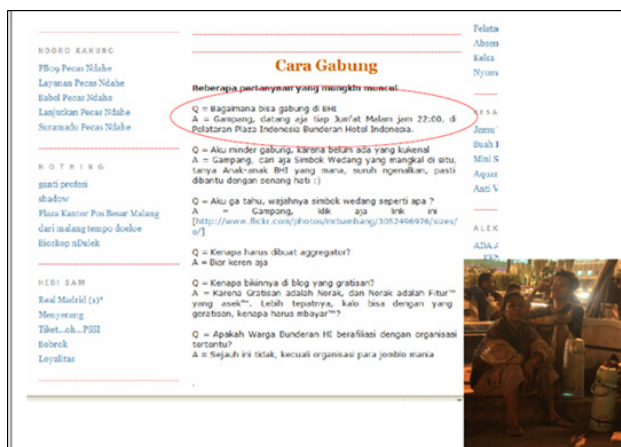


Figure 4 Bundaran Hotel Indonesia's requirement of offline gathering for new members on the community's blog

During my research I came to know that several blogger communities had weekly routine offline

gatherings, which I would categorize as informal offline gatherings. Usually there were no fixed places to meet. Members set the time and place during their daily interactions in mailing list chat. Cah Andong Blogger Community (Yogyakarta), for instance, has weekly offline gatherings known as JUMINT-EN (JUM'at MIDnight TENGuk-tenguk, Bludging on Friday Midnight) (see Figure 4). Loenpia.net Blogger Community (Semarang) has a weekly offline gathering programme JAMU, (Jamuan Akhir MinggU, Weekend Feast). Like Loenpia Semarang, the North Sumatra blogger community also has a weekly offline meeting every Friday night. I notice that nowadays these informal offline meetings are increasingly difficult to arrange. The common issues are members' tight schedules at work and senior members who used to be a driving force in organising kopdar have moved out of the city.

There appears to be a trend for blogger communities to hold routine kopdar that are more formal. These routine meetings have the more formal purpose to empower both members and the public. Anging Mammiri blogger community, for example, initiated a monthly offline gathering, Tudang Sipulung.²⁶ There is also another offline meeting, known as an 'unplanned offline gathering' (kopdar dadakan), to accommodate a visit with bloggers from other communities, a reunion with a member who moved to another city, or to accommodate special events such as public holidays and wedding parties.

Figure 5 illustrates the formal ambience of Tudang Sipulung. This time, they discussed a topic about Information Technology (IT), Media and Community. This picture shows that the Anging Mammiri community set a stage for key speakers and printed a formal banner to be hung on the stage.

Official community's Twitter and Facebook accounts.

In addition to communities' blogs and Wikis, Indonesian blogger communities also use other social media platforms to communicate with each other, such as Twitter and Facebook. Communication using these social media platforms plays a role to mobilise members on particular occasions. In February 2012, for example, AngingMammiri's former leader, i-Rara, invited AM members to replace their avatars on twitter with new avatars wearing traditional dresses from Sulawesi. That is to say the use of cross-platform social media illustrates Indonesian blogger communities' commitment to intensely cultivate online communications between members and thus strengthen social bonds within communities. Furthermore, it also portrays Indonesian bloggers high engagement with media in this media saturated world on daily basis. Finally, the cross platform communication practices open up the possibility for bloggers to establish relationship between communities considering cyberspace is borderless.

Looked at in another way, the representation of community identity by posting avatars in traditional costumes illustrates a very parochial approach.

It is as if the mode of identity formation is locked in the New Order trope of diversity in unity. Instead of representing themselves as members of borderless cyberspace; they apparently represent themselves in the ritualised and rather trivial manner of traditional costumes. This confirms my argument that the majority of blogger communities still relate the sense of community to their pre-existing parochial sense.

Collectivistic traditions and group cohesiveness

These blogging practices in turn, reflect the local cultural index for particular localities (Hjorth, 2008). Most of the time these localised cultural blogging practices signal the collective identity of each Indonesian blogger community, but more specifically, they also demonstrate situated practices rooted in situated knowledge. Local culture operates to ensure community and/or society participation and sustain networking. From this point of view, I suggest that blogging practices cannot be treated merely as a practice. We can look on these practices as a pervasive cultural artefact that forms a blogging culture. The paradigm in approaching internet users as part of "blogging culture" in Indonesia then shifts from its early definition of blogging practices that assumes users are 'active', to internet users as users and producers: producers (Bruns, 2008). The enthusiasm reflected by each blogger community in Indonesia for fixing societal problems is driven by 'the vagaries of user-producer interest' (Bruns, 2008, p. 23). Saying that, my study shows that the social agency of each blogger community exemplified through action-planned social activities, is a result of the interaction among group membership. This membership is shaped through their identification with a collective sense that they share the same ethnicity and/or territory. In this case, the 'vagaries' are a result of interaction between the embedding of 30 years of hegemonic ideology in ethnic/territorial identification with networked 'complete connectedness'. Blogger community members perform the function of 'producers' in line with their identification with an ideologically constructed idea of 'sub-nationality'.

This gives us a more favourable perspective on blogger communities and their roots. Given my previous suggestion that the communities were an aspect or a manifestation of old intrusive government surveillance practices, the influence of collectivistic traditions that was encouraged under Suharto's regime can still be seen to enhance and contribute to shaping a sense of community or local solidarity. Thus in general, although blogging culture in Indonesia may reflect a pro-social image of bloggers as agent, practices of solidarity are often limited to neighbourhood associational interactions (see e.g. Lussier and Fish, 2012, p. 74-75). After the first Indonesia Blogger Fest, a woman blogger from Makassar posted a personal complaint, stating she was disappointed by the decision of the committee which she felt was based on a non-transparent system.²⁷ Her post also expressed dissatisfaction over the fact that Cah Andong was the blogger commu-



Figure 5 Tudang Sipulung, Anging Mamiri's formal offline gathering

nity winner which had conducted the most social activities. She introduced an issue of ethnic sentiment by suggesting the victory was due to the board consisting of mostly Javanese; the majority of whom were 'cronies' of the Head of the Committee at the moment. Consequently, the blog of this particular Anging Mamiri Blogger Community member became a battlefield over the question of ethnic prejudice. The 2008 Blogger Fest developed into a cold war, projecting the issue of Javanese and non-Javanese bloggers into the blogosphere.

Somebody is green with envy! Should you create an envious blogger community? Your envy is the ruin of Anging Mamiri (AM). I am sure AM sincerely supported Indonesia Blogger Fest. It is not important who won the award. Why would you write a post during your pre menstruation syndrome? (A comment on TP's blog from Gustro, on November 26th 2008 at 4.30 pm in It's Teeza's blog post)

BECAUSE WE ARE NOT COMMUNITIES FROM JAVA AND/OR BALI islands. I think that's the main reason. Once I heard my friends' stories, those who participated in Blogger Fest 2008 and they felt sorry for coming to that event. Next year you should think twice to participate! (A comment from Aceh Blogger Community on 12 December, 2008 at 1:43 am in It's Teeza's blog post)

Despite Turkle's argument that virtual environments are valuable as places where we can acknowledge our inner diversity (1995), the tensions between blogger communities illustrate that the Indonesia Blogger Fest instead became a channel for imposing ethnic and/or territorial (or any other cultural) markers on cyberspace. Each ethnic/territorially marked blogger community constructed a shared memory integral to every member's ideal-typical cultural identity – drawing a line between in-group and out-group. This suggests that the bloggers easily reinvent a hegemonic ideology of (sub) nationality. As bloggers rearticulate the New Order's legacy by reconstructing power relationships within their online communities, the tension between bloggers from Java and non-Java is perpetuated. The de-

bate in the Anging Mamiri Blogger Community member's blog became a site of a primordialistic identity clash in cyberspace.

These structures and expectations, fault-lines or default lines we might say, make it a delicate matter for outsiders without borders who long for person-to-person connections, or are 'distanced' from individuating information within the in-group. It is hard to measure, but we may say that Indonesian blogger communities hardly deliver on the inclusive, de-territorialised potential that the internet as a technology, opens up to its users.

In a similar manner, blogger communities reflect fraternal relationship by occupying administrator and moderator positions that grant them special opportunities, especially in power in controlling mechanisms.

The tension and dispute between blogger non Java and bloggers from Java demonstrate Geertz's idea on Javanese centrism, that the whole national ideology revolves around Javanese world view and is imposed upon the rest of the country (1991). The Javanese centrism has been the central of hegemony under Soeharto regime, marginalised the expression of other ethnic characteristic (Pemberton, 1994) and lead to cultural revival (Barter, 2013) that describes what Geertz has called primodial attachment (1963). At the same time, due to this primodial attachment, my research on regional bloggers communities in Indonesia refutes Putnam's argument of civil society (1993). Instead of encouraging self-governing associations that give space for democracy and freedom to members (Putnam, 1993, p. 117-118), regional bloggers communities in Indonesia tend to discourage members' participation in public and to tend to limit members' agency.

Conclusion

Due to Indonesia's cultural and geographical characteristics, successive Indonesian governments have organised national programs as efforts to actualise a united nation through a project of banal nationalism. Over time the state sought to downplay ethnic sentiment in favour of national union and unity. Despite the national slogan 'Bhinneka Tunggal Ika' (Unity in Diversity), which describes the most basic characteristics of Indonesian cultural diversity, Indonesian nationhood, as with many other forms of nationhood, is historically, politically and culturally constructed. Scholars argue, however, that these efforts, instead of producing unity, have had a hegemonic effect and have produced resistances in people's social and cultural investment in their locality (Boellstroff 2002, Anderson, 1983).

This imposed construction of the nation is evident in the Indonesian blogosphere through the community practices, especially through the creation of digital artefacts I observed. Although banal nationalism programs are intended to draw the sense of unity among diverse communities,

paradoxically they have reinvented the sense of the local through displays of digital artefacts – representing their communal identities. I discovered that Indonesian blogger communities foreground their sense of the local rather than seeing their communities as part of the global space of flows to use Castell’s phrase (Bertrand, 2004). Therefore, I posit that the internet, plays a role in rearticulating the power discourses within Indonesia, assisting in the formation of a discourse of Post Authoritarian nationhood.

Referring to my findings, I suggest that in the case of Indonesian blogging culture, it does not refer to a ‘modern community’, one that is shaped by pragmatic institutional and economic practices. The ‘networking’ function provided by blogging rarely transcends the primordialism of communities. I agree with Anderson’s arguments that nationality is shaped by old languages but mediated through new models (1983). Following this argument, concerning Doueihi’s question (2011) whether blogging encourages civitas

or polis, I suggest that in the case of Indonesian bloggers, they reflect a unique transaction between civitas and polis. On one hand they readily establish their identity as members of civitas (communities) but on the other hand, many also develop their identity as members of polis (society) by establishing digital artefacts. Additionally, these practices require memberships, which are strongly attached to localities and territories.

The banal reminders of nationhood, enhanced by Indonesia’s power holders, encourage the construction of an imagined community in cyberspace. Even though blogger communities are a result of online interactions, parochial Indonesian blogger communities do not reflect the promise of civil society. Unfortunately, we have seen the promise of online interaction contributing to users’ liberation is not the case. The fact that Indonesian blogger communities are built upon fraternal foundation limits Indonesian bloggers’ empowerment.

Notes

- 1 In following sections I will discuss that in fact during its thirty-two-year-authority, Suharto’s new order consistently attempted to eliminate the sense of this traditional desire of ethnic sentiment.
- 2 Other scholars, who exclude the account of race and ethnicity, see cyberspace is a place that can encourage democracy.
- 3 But it does not mean they become unidentified since a number of technologies examine online activities (Hendler & Golbeck 2008; Musser, O’Reilly & Team, 2006). On-site web analytics, for example, provides visitors’ information such as IP address, city, date and time, ISP, operating system, and Web browser. Another technology, web crawler such as Technorati and IssueCrawler can map ‘invisible’ network between blogs –which render signal of community.
- 4 In his book *Banal Nationalism*, Billig states that mass media such as newspapers and television are political tools to wave nationhood flags on one hand, and as the unwaved national flags (Billig, 1995).
- 5 AMD is a civic action program that is shaped from the dual function of Indonesian military. It covers politics and government, thus starting in 1980 under the new Order, Indonesian government involve Indonesian military to improve Indonesia remote’s villages. As part of national program, TVRI continually aired recorded Military’s participation national wide.
- 6 It promotes national motto “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika”
- 7 Minister of Communication and Information, Muhammad Nuh, announced 27 October as the Indonesian Blogger Day.
- 8 I was not part of any blogger communities back then. I felt isolated, since every one there seemed a part of something: community. It didn’t look like ‘a crowd’; since I could see and feel that on one hand they knew very well to each other. On the other hand they were not part of other ‘crowd’ or ‘group’. To put it in other words, they gave me an illustration of ‘us’ and ‘them’.
- 9 Wong kito is Palembangnese that means ‘our people’ or ‘we, the people of Palembang’. This notion of ‘Wong Kito’ culturally has been used to differ them from other culture or other societies.
- 10 Kayuh Baimbay’ is a part of Banjarmasin’s (South Kalimantan) local motto: ‘Kayuh baimbay gawi sabumi, haram manyarah waja sampai kaputing’ that means ‘esprit de corps and to fight until the bitter end tabs.’ This saying comes from Sultan Antasari, a local hero from Banjarmasin.
- 11 Loenpia is an iconic dish from Semarang.
- 12 Anging Mammiri means ‘the light of breeze’, a historical state of people from Makassar. In the past Makassarnese spent most of their live in the sea as famous sailors and fishers. Thus light breeze is strongly associated with them.
- 13 Andong is a cultural icon for Yogyakarta. It is a traditional chariot that used to be transportation for local people.
- 14 The hotel Indonesia roundabout (Bundaran Hotel Indonesia) is located in front of the legendary Hotel Indonesia.
- 15 Tugu Pahlawan is a landmark of Surabaya. It is a monument to honour the deceased heroes of Surabaya during the Independence War of 1945-1949.
- 16 Let alone the fact that several blogger communities require the weekly offline gatherings, which I will explain in the next sections.
- 17 Mostly regional blogger communities use various communication channels to establish social relationship within members. They do not only create a web site, where members can place personal post in community’s blog, but also create a group’s mailing list for daily interaction. Additional to that, they also create a group page in Facebook and a group account in Twitter.
- 18 An example of such a restrictive requirement is apparent in *Cah Andong* Blogger Community and Palembang Blogger Community.
- 19 As an illustration M was sent to the jail after he posted one Indonesia’s celebrity cartoons on his blogs. M gave me clues that these issues are including sensitive news about Indonesian celebrities.
- 20 Bali Blogger Community and Wong Kito post a template of introduction thread on official blogs. Loenpia Semarang provides a template of introduction thread as soon as someone send an email to community’s mailing list. Blogger Ngalam and Tugu Pahlawan Community provide a link to download the form on their official blogs.
- 21 *Kopi* refers to the act of confirming the receipt of a message in HT radio contact, while *darat* refers to land which may relate to ‘landing’.
- 22 Offline sociability, or – in another term: “for quality control purpose”

- 23 "Links are the social currency of this interaction, allowing webloggers to be aware of who is reading and commenting on their writings" (Marlow, 2004).
- 24 A similar interrelation between 'physical' social structure and its reproduction through blogosphere is also apparent in the proliferation of *warnet* (Internet Café) in Indonesia. *Warnet* does not only facilitate online social relationships but also function as places to extend online and offline settings (Lim, M. 2009. Muslim Voices in the Blogosphere: Mosaics of Local-Global Discourses. In: Goggin, G. & McLelland, M. (eds.) *Internationalizing Internet studies: Beyond Anglophone paradigms*. New York: Routledge. Colchester, M. 1986. Unity and Diversity: Indonesian Policy Towards Tribal Peoples. *Ecologist*, 16.) Both cases, in this sense, illustrate that the community formed online both passes and criticizes the notion of economic determinism in 'modern community'.
- 25 The ruling block established a well-structured social administration system which included, from the lowest level, Neighbourhood Unit (Rukun Tetangga, RT), Community Unit (Rukun Warga, RW), Sub District (Kelurahan) continued up to the highest level such as ReGENCY (Kabupaten) and Province.
- 26 Tudang Sipulung comes from Makassar language's vocabulary that means sitting to gather together. Even though AM is a blogger community, but it is not necessary to be AM's member to attend this event. In these monthly events, AM invites bloggers in Makassar to involve offline discussions for specific topics and to share knowledge. Therefore, information about Tudang Sipulung usually is announced in <http://tudangsipulung.angingmammiri.org/> and @paccarita, the official Twitter account of Makassar blogger community.
- 27 Pesta blogger 2008: So disappointing! (October, 22 2008). Her blog is already declined. This post is archived at web.archive.org/web/20090126024245/http://www.tee-za.net/?p=222.

Bibliography

- Ali-Hasan, N. & Adamic, L. (2007). Expressing Social Relationships on the Blog through Links and Comments. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Weblogs and Social Media*.
- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism*. New York City, NY: Verso.
- Barzilai-Nahon, K. & Neumann, S. (2005). Bounded in Cyberspace: An Empirical Model of Self-Regulation in Virtual Communities. *Proceedings of the 38th Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*.
- Baym, N. K. (2000). *Tune In, Log On: Soaps, fandom and Online Community*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publishing.
- Baym, N. K. (2002). "I Think of Them as Friends" Interpersonal Relationships in the Online Community. In Humez, G. D. J. M. (ed.). *Gender, Race, & Class in Media*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publishing.
- Bell, D. (2006). *Cyberculture Theorists: Manuel Castells and Donna Haraway*, Oxford, Routledge.
- Bertrand, J. (2004). *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bhabha, H. K. (2004). *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Billig, M. (1995). *Banal Nationalism*. London: SAGE Publishing.
- Blood, R. (2002). *The Weblog Handbook: Practical Advice on Creating and Maintaining Your Blog*, Perseus Books Group.
- Blood, R. (2004). *A Few Thoughts on Journalism and What Can Weblogs Do About It*. Retrieved from http://www.rebeccablood.net/essays/what_is_journalism.html.
- Blood, R. (2004). How blogging Software Reshapes the Online Community. *Communication of the ACM*, 47, 53-55.
- Boyd, D. (2009). A Blogger's Blog: Exploring the Definition of a Medium. *Reconstruction: Studies in Contemporary Culture*, 6. <http://reconstruction.eserver.org/064/boyd.shtml>.
- Castells, M. (1996). *The Rise of The Network Society* Vol 1. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Castells, M. (2002). Epilogue: Informationalism and the Network Society. In Himanen, P. & Torvalds, L. (Eds.). *The Hacker Ethic*. New York City, NY: Random House.
- Colchester, M. (1986). Unity and Diversity: Indonesian Policy Towards Tribal Peoples. *Ecologist*, 16.
- Day, G. (2006). *Community and Everyday Life*. Abingdon-on-Thames: Taylor & Francis.
- Dicks, B. (2004). *Culture on Display: The Production of Contemporary Visibility*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Doueihi, M. (2011). *Digital cultures*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Etzioni, Amitai. (2015). Community. In Gibbons, M. T., Coole, D., Ellis, E. & Ferguson, K. (eds.) *The Encyclopedia of Political Thought*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Fuchs, C. (2011). *Internet and Society: Social Theory In the Information Age*. London, Routledge.
- Gayatri, I. H. (2010). Nationalism, Democratisation and Primordial Sentiment in Indonesia: Problems of Ethnicity versus Indonesian-ness (the cases of Aceh, Riau, Papua and Bali). *Journal of Indonesian Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Hendler, J. & Golbeck, J. (2008). Metcalfe's law, Web 2.0, and the Semantic Web. *Web Semant*, 6, 14-20.
- Herring, S. C., Scheidt, L. A., Bonus, S. & Wright, E. (2014) Bridging the Gap: a Genre Analysis of Weblogs. *Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*, IEEE Computer Society, 11 pp.-111.
- Honeycutt, C. (2005). Hazing as a Process of Boundary Maintenance in an Online Community. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 10, Article 3.
- Jackson, A., Yates, J. & Orlikowski, W. (2007). Corporate Blogging: Building Community Through Persistent Digital Talk. *Proceedings on the 40th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*.
- Jones, Q. (1997). Virtual-Communities, Virtual Settlements & Cyber-Archaeology: A Theoretical Outline. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Vol 3, Issue 3, 0-0.
- Jones, S. (1998). *CyberSociety 2.0: Revisiting computer-mediated communication and community*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publishing.
- Lim, M. (2009). Muslim Voices in the Blogosphere: Mosaics of Local-Global Discourses. In Goggin, G. & McLelland, M. (Eds.) *Internationalizing Internet Studies: Beyond Anglophone Paradigms*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Ludlow, P. (1996). *High Noon on the Electronic Frontier: Conceptual issues in Cyberspace*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Lussier, D. N. & Fish, M. S. (2012). Indonesia: The Benefits of Civic Engagement. *Journal of Democracy*, Vol 23, 70-84.
- Maltz, T. (1996). Customary Law & Power in Internet Communities. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Vol 2, 0-0.
- Marlow, C. (2004). Audience, structure and authority in the Weblog Community. *The International Communication Association Conference. New Orleans, LA*.
- Masolo, D. A. (2002). Community, Identity and the Cultural Space. *Rue Descartes*, Vol 36, 19-51.
- McLuhan, M. & Powers, B. C. (1989). *The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and Media in the 21st Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Musser, J. (2006). *Web 2.0 Principles and Best Practices*. Newton, MA: O'Reilly Media.
- Nakamura, L. (2002). *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity and Identity on the Internet*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Nardi, B. A. (2005). Beyond Bandwidth: Dimensions of Connection in Interpersonal Communication. *Computer Supported Cooperative Work*, Vol 14, 91-130.
- Nardi, B. A. (2010). *My Life as a Night Elf Priest: An Anthropological Account of the World of Warcraft*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Nardi, D. S. B. & Gumbrecht, M. (2004). Blogging as Social Activity, or, Would You Let 900 Million People Read Your Diary?: *Proceedings on The Conference on Computer-Supported Cooperative Work* (pp. 222-228). New York: ACM Press.

- Putnam, R. D. (1993). *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Rettberg, J. W. (2008). *Blogging*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Rheingold, H. (2000). *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Ritter, N. (2007). *Blogs Are Not Virtual Communities*. Retrieved from <https://blog.perfectspace.com/2007/04/04/blogs-are-not-virtual-communities/>.
- Tönnies, F. (1988). *Community & Society*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.
- Tönnies, F. & Harris, J. (2001). *Community and Civil Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Turkle, S. (1995). *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Vaughn, B. (2010). *Indonesia: Domestic Politics, Strategic Dynamics and American Interests*. Collingdale, PA: Diane Publishing.
- Wei, C. (2004). Formation of Norms in a Blog Community. In Gurak, L., Antonijevic, L. Johnson, C. Ratliff, & Reyman, J. (eds.) *Into the Blogosphere: Rhetoric, Community and Culture of Weblogs*. University of Minnesota.
- Weinreich, F. (1997). *Establishing a Point of View Toward Virtual Communities*. Computer-Mediated Communication Magazine. Retrieved from <http://www.december.com/cmc/mag/1997/feb/wein.html>.