CRITICAL MULTICULTURALISM IN ONLINE POLITICS: 
THE STUDY OF ITS SIGNIFICANCE AND APPLICABILITY IN 
INDONESIAN CONTEXT

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Abstrak
Dalam masyarakat Indonesia yang begitu beragam (agama, budaya, etnis, bahasa), multikulturalisme adalah sebuah faktsitas yang dinamis. Dikatakan dinamis karena multikulturalisme sebagai sebuah posisi ideologis yang merayakan keberagaman ternyata mengalami pasang surut, baik secara internal (tiga dilema, yaitu: esensialisme vs. identitas-identitas cair; universalisme vs. partikularisme; dan pengakuan vs. redistribusi), maupun secara eksternal (tantangan dari fundamentalisme agama, kebangkitan etnosentrisme, dan ekonomi neo-liberal). Secara teoretis, multikulturalisme memiliki sejumlah posisi ideologis yang tidak selalu searah sehaluan (lima jenis oleh Bhikhu Parekh, delapan jenis oleh Steven Vertovec, dan sembilan jenis oleh Gerard Delanty), sehingga perlu dipilih jenis multikulturalisme yang manakah yang akan dijadikan kerangka teoretis dalam sebuah ikhtiar penelitian yang terbatas. Selain itu, dalam praksisnya multikulturalisme tidak hanya dikontestasi di ranah politik riil, namun juga di ranah politik online. Secara empiris, pencitraan dan kampanye multikulturalisme lewat media online, seperti portal berita, website, dan blog adalah sebuah ranah baru yang masih belum intensif ditelusuri para peneliti sosial budaya dan politik di Indonesia. Terdapat indikasi bahwa perkembangan dunia internet selama dua dekade terakhir ini menjadi lahan subur bagi merebaknya situs dan blog yang anti-pluralitas serta cenderung rasis/fundamentalis, yang dapat memengaruhi pembentukan karakter sosial masyarakat Indonesia secara umum. Dengan mengambil model politik demokrasi deliberatif Habermas dan referensi terbaru di bidang New Media, peneliti mempertahankan tesis bahwa politik multikultural di ranah online di Indonesia lebih tepat dipahami sebagai arena kontestasi yang terbuka dan non-hegemonik yang, jika dipahami demikian, dapat mendorong perubahan sosial dalam arti memperkaya gugus praktik politik riil secara signifikan. Diskursus dan aplikasi paham multikulturalisme kritis dalam ranah online juga dipercaya dapat meningkatkan male media (media literacy) yang pro-multikulturalisme sehingga hal ini pantas untuk dijadikan bagian penting kurikulum pendidikan abad XXI.

Kata kunci: multikulturalisme, multikulturalisme kritis, politik online, New Media, demokrasi deliberatif.

Introduction
At the most basic, personal and reflective level, multiculturalism with its variety of aspects has engaged me in several ways. I am a Sumatran-born Javanese person, married to an Indonesian-born, Javanese and Indonesian-speaking, Chinese-descendant woman, whose mother is fluent in speaking both Mandarin and Indonesian language,
but also tends to dislike anything other than Chinese-related culture and language. My union with her has increased my curiosity in learning Chinese culture all the more as well as enjoying some great moments due to the facts of cultural differences, such as cuisines, customs, cultural rites honored and revered, and, in a deeper level, living values uphold and maintained. My great grandfather from my father line, I was told, came from Germany, as a soldier, along with Dutch soldiers during the era of colonialism back in early 1900s. My father and mother are from Javanese origin, the former born in Central Java, the latter in Lampung (Sumatra), nevertheless, my mother tongue is Indonesian. Also, I was raised within a devoted Catholic family, which, in its extended version, has a mixture of both Moslem and Catholic believers; some of them are haji and hajjah and one of my grandfathers is the bishop of Lampung. To my surprise, recently, I find that some of my aunties and uncles are members of certain radical Moslem groups and affiliations who are eager to practice Islam and its rules in more radical ways. This variety of backgrounds (religion, ethnic, language, etc) has made me into what I am now, a multicultural person with one’s own tensions and excitements.

At the historical and societal level, in the context of Indonesia, multiculturalism is a fact of everyday life, even long time ago before Indonesia turned into an independent and sovereign state in 1945. Ever since the era of Sriwijaya Kingdom (in the 7th – 11th century) and Majapahit Kingdom (13th – 16th century), respect for the diversity of cultures and beliefs were a common norm, thus inspiring the formation of declared motto of Indonesia’s ideology based on a verse taken from kakawin Sutasoma, “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika”. “Nusantara”, a common term to denominate “Indonesia” before its independence in 1945, also indicates the spirit of multiculturalism since, as an archipelago, it consists of clusters of islands and hundreds of cultures, native languages, and rites. The birth of Indonesia as a nation also progressed through some multicultural milestones, such as National Awakening 1908, Youth Pledge 1928 and, finally, the founding fathers deliberative congresses resulting on the Declaration of Independence August 17, 1945.

At the theoretical level, multiculturalism is a common discourse among social and political theorists, especially in Europe and North American countries, between those who endorse its positive aspects (to mention some well-known multicultural theorists: Charles Taylor, Bhikhu Parekh, Will Kymlicka, Seyla Benhabib, Amy Gutmann, Tariq Moodod, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Iris Marion Young, James Tully, Chandran Kukathas) as well as those who are critical and even in favor against multiculturalism (to name just a few: Brian Barry, Kenan Malik, Susan Moller Okin).

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1 The title for Muslim men and women who have performed the Hajj (the obligatory religious rite of pilgrimage for able Muslim men and women, to the city of Mecca in Arab Saudi)
5 See Kenan Malik’s blog, especially this piece of article titled “against multiculturalism” http://www.kenanmalik.com/essays/against_mc.html
While multiculturalism as public policy and attitude in general is eclipsing, even for some cases: under-attack, on the continent of Europe7 and North America8, there is still some hope for multiculturalism to thrive on Asian soil, especially in Indonesia, due to its long-standing history, ideological back-ups, and deeply-rootedness within various cultures across seas, straits and islands comprising the nation-state called Indonesia.

For a start, multiculturalism in Indonesia is mostly understood and practiced not as a philosophical and political discourse in academic circles, nor public policy (such as “affirmative action” in Canada and Australia), but rather as “a lived experience and encounters between different people … this everyday conviviality of multiculture” (following Paul Gilroy’s terminology9) in everyday settings (at the popular level) as well as some political contestations and series of struggles for (more) influence and recognition between and among majority and minority, especially in terms of religions and ethnicities.

Research Methods

This paper is pursuing a qualitative research10. The methods used are relying more on the interpretation of the data and documents available as far as the theme “critical multiculturalism” and “online politics” goes. The objects under study are some websites that typically represent two contesting ideological positions (the antis and the pros) regarding critical multiculturalism as a theoretical perspective and analytical tool. Both ideological positions are each represented by two websites. Nevertheless, they are all scrutinized under the same banner of online politics. I will return shortly to explaining these two ideological positions in the following page.

Reflexivity of the researcher as well as the material of the research undergone is inherent part of the research itself. Even more, the feelings, emotions stirred, irritations, impressions, comments, “are the data in their own right, forming part of the interpretation.” (Flick, 2007). Qualitative research at the end of modernity, according to Toulmin (1990)11, follows 4 trends, namely: “the return to the oral, the return to the particular, the return to the local, and the return to the timely.” Therefore, it is less ambitious in sketching the universal pattern of embracing all in the canvas of academic circle and journals. To put it succinctly, it is “oriented towards analyzing concrete cases in their temporal and local particularity, and starting from people’s expressions and

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11 Cited in Flick (2007), pp. 12 - 13
activities in their local contexts.” The locality of the text and the context analyzed in this study is Indonesian, both in the written language as well as the social political milieu where they emerge and grow. However, the scope and the accessibility of the text under study are reaching out across geographical boundaries. In other words, the websites under observation could be accessed by anyone as long as there is internet connection. Regarding “the timely”, the research is limited to two particular years, that is to say 2010 and 2011. These two particular years are yielding many interesting events which are relevant with the purpose of this research.

The epistemological principle used in qualitative research is verstehen (interpretive understanding), as opposed with erklären (causal explanation). In the course of the verstehen epistemic axis, the researcher “tries to make empathetic sense of the phenomenon by looking for the perspective from which the phenomenon appears to be meaningful and appropriate.” To be counted as “meaningful” and “appropriate”, the facts or the text to be interpreted should be relevant with the topic posed. About this, a renowned Austrian phenomenologist, Alfred Schütz (1899 – 1959), as cited by Flick (2007: 31), once stated that “all facts are from the outset facts selected from a universal context by the activities of our mind. They are … always interpreted facts, either facts looked at as detached from their context by an artificial abstraction or facts considered in their particular setting. In either case, they carry their interpretational inner and outer horizons.”

To sum up the methods used in this research, it is important to note that reflexivity, interpretation, and understanding (verstehen) of the researcher could not be reduced to the all-too-subjective position as well as conclusions found. As reminded by Malcom Williams (2003: 55-56), “Reflexivity, understanding and interpretation are interwoven. To understand how or why something is like it is requires an act of interpretation, but the ‘depth’ of interpretation will itself depends on the question asked and the extent of the social resources held in common by researcher and researched.”

With regards to a kind of political theory involved within this study, I would follow some suggestions from Anthony Simon Laden and David Owen (editors) in their thought-provoking book, Multiculturalism and Political Theory (2007). In the introduction section of the book, Laden and Owen both agrees on the difficulty to accept the existing political theories (particularly “liberalism” framework and disputes among European Christians) in analyzing today’s various modes of multiculturalism(s) with all its problems and complexities. They tend to be open “to develop a greater sensitivity to both social context and the particularities of different cultural demands” (Laden and Owen, 2007, p. 9) in order to attain the kind of theory appropriate to analyze

12 Flick (2007), p. 13
14 See also Parekh (2001), pp. 13 – 14. In the introduction part of his widely-acknowledged book, Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory, Parekh points out that "Liberalism is a substantive doctrine advocating a specific view of man, society and the world and embedded in and giving rise to a distinct way of life. As such it represents a particular cultural perspective and cannot provide a broad and impartial enough framework to conceptualize other cultures or their relations with it." Parekh then continues affirming that, "...such a theory cannot provide an intellectually coherent and morally acceptable theoretical basis of multicultural society."
some significant issues of cultural diversity, such as religious pluralism, linguistic minorities, and racial injustice.

Therefore, the personal background I have mentioned earlier in the introduction, “the multicultural person with its tensions and excitements”, as well as the cultural and social-political milieu I have been living in, which is mostly Javanese and, in a broader context, Indonesia, is both the point of departure as well as the contextual setting, upon which I will pursue this study.

**Multiculturalism in Indonesia: contextualizing the debate**

Despite the pessimism of a renowned political thinker, J. S. Mill, more than 100 years ago, on “the prospects for democratic governance in deeply plural countries” (Hefner, 2001: 1)\(^\text{15}\), multiculturalism has been growing hand in hand with democratic regime in Indonesia, notably after the reformation era (1998 above). Nonetheless, multiculturalism paradigm as an official state policy is sometimes at odds with multicultural perspective (Parekh 2000: 338; Ujan 2009: 15) from the citizens of Indonesia. Ethno-religious conflicts are the most striking examples of classical and contemporary political and also multicultural problems in Indonesia for the last six decades after its Proclamation of Independence (Hefner, 2001). For the last fifty years, the Chinese-related discriminating issues\(^\text{16}\) and the majority-minority religion conflicts are rampant; nevertheless, those conflicts and acts of discrimination are rarely solved comprehensively and, consequently, resurface again in other fashions with different actors, victims, and settings. For the sake of this study, I will focus on majority-minority religion conflicts and tensions in Indonesia currently (2010 – 2011) as framed by some websites below.

For the legal and ideological support, multiculturalism in Indonesia, bearing the motto of “bhinneka tunggal ika” (loosely translated as “Unity in Diversity”) is guaranteed by the State ideology, Pancasila. The articulation of “Pancasila five principles” (lima sila) during its inception time by Indonesia founding fathers (Mr. Soekarno, Mr. Soepomo, Mr. Muh. Yamin, Mr. Muh. Hatta) could also be seen as the early version of triumph of nationalism spirit and respect for diversity of beliefs and faith over religious force (especially Islam) and ethnic particularism (notably Javanese)\(^\text{17}\). Observing with acute reflection on the history of Pancasila’s formation, as

\(^{15}\) Given the year of research as well as publication of this book, there are many future projections of multiculturalism in Indonesia with its dynamics not covered in this book. Nevertheless, by comparing three adjacent countries colored by the diversity of ethnic, religious, and language (Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia), as well as their specific historical backgrounds, this book is a good starting point to understand the background (social, cultural and political) over which multiculturalism in Indonesia thrives for years after the book’s publication.


\(^{17}\) For the brief introduction into the debates and discussions of the formation of lima sila (five principles) in Pancasila, including the once-stated but later-omitted “Jakarta Charter” (“with the obligation for its
well as the open disputes between founding fathers during BPUPKI (Agency for Investigating Efforts for the Preparation of Indonesian Independence) meeting sessions between May – July 1945\(^{18}\), we gather that Pancasila is not just “another ideology” emerged coincidentally during war time as a late reaction; nevertheless Pancasila was a deeply-rooted ideology built through successive phases and periods, or, in the voice of Muh. Yamin, "the courses of the many unrelated histories of the so many localities and ethnic groups in the Indonesian archipelago as ones that moved towards the formation of the nation-state." (Taufik Abdullah, 2009: 3).

Briefly summed, this specificity of historical importance of Pancasila as the uniting force of Indonesian cultural, political, religious, linguistic and ethnic diversities, is then leading towards the official (state) recognition of six major religions: Islam, Protestant, Catholic, Hindu, Buddha, and Confucianism (Konghucu) which may co-exist peacefully, practicing the first principle of Pancasila, Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa (“Belief in the one and only God”). This official recognition of freedom of religion and manifesting as well as practicing one’s belief in the Almighty is later legalized within the Constitution (Undang-Undang Dasar 1945 and amendment version), section XI: Religion, Article 29, verse 2, saying that “The state guarantees each and every citizen the freedom of religion and of worship in accordance with his religion and belief,” and article 28E, “Each person is free to worship and to practice the religion of his choice, etc.”\(^{19}\)

Therefore, freedom of religion, to worship, and to practice one’s belief is very strongly supported by the state and by the law of Indonesia.

It is also worth to remember the philosophical reflection of Prof. Driyarkara on Pancasila, especially the first principle as follows, “Here religion cannot be enforced by the state because religion is based on belief, and belief cannot be enforced. It follows that the state cannot regulate and govern the ways to practice, to pray, to fast, etcetera. Religious life is not included within immediate goals of a state; the state cannot take care of the inner life of human being… With this principle, we profess that the Principle of Ketuhanan is a deeper principle of our governing state (penegaraan). The principle of Ketuhanan is a higher goal, the ultimate destiny… If religion and the state is aligning very closely, there is a danger that religion will be used as a political instrument. As a consequence, religion is lowered down as or becoming a factor/element of politics.”\(^{20}\)

Even though it is obvious that constitutionally as well as philosophically “the freedom of religion” issue is guaranteed and protected, nevertheless, this “lowering down of


\(^{18}\) See the dynamics of the formation of Pancasila and the Constitution of Indonesia, at a glance, at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_Indonesia

\(^{19}\) See http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Constitution_of_the_Republic_of_Indonesia

religion under the armpit of politics” is still the classical and contemporary problem of relationship between religion and the state, or the religion with politics.

To make it more actual, the first principle of Pancasila sounds more beautiful in letters rather than in its implications in daily lives of people. For the last decade, the rising of the so-called radical groups under the banner of religion (and sects of religion) are challenging as well as threatening the very foundation of Indonesia official ideology Pancasila as well as the lives and the rights of people to practice their religious beliefs (Hasani & Naipospos, 2010).

Highlighting the events occurred in 2010 - 2011, the current status of multiculturalism in Indonesia is worrying, particularly with regards to “freedom of religion”. Prof. Franz Magnis-Suseno, the German-born Indonesian-citizen, a prominent moral and political philosopher recently wrote in Kompas, “Masa Depan Demokrasi Kita,” as follows, “The most worrying thing is this: the state more and more fails to guarantee ‘the freedom of religion and the rights to manifest one’s belief’ for minorities. Some groups condemned as heretic by majority are threatened with violence and the state fails to protect them, shame! In the context of Rechstaat, the central government’s incapability to guarantee the execution of the Supreme Court’s decision [sic No. 127 PK/TUN/2009] on the rights to practice religion is worrying and shameful.”

Prof. Magnis-Suseno is not the only academician public figure in speaking out his thoughts and concerns regarding “freedom of religion” in Indonesia. There are many other prominent public figures, senior and young intellectuals alike, some are still living while others already becoming legend in their own right, sharing his concerns, such as Mohammad Natsir, Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), Nurcholish Madjid (Cak Nur), Harun Nasution, Idham Chalid, Mohammad Cholil Bisri, Deliar Noer, Syafii Maarif, Mohammad Amien Rais, Azyumardi Azra, KH Abdul Muahimin, Muhammad Nur Kholis Setiawan, Anies Rasyid Baswedan, Djohan Effendi, Budhi Munawwar Rahman, Dawam Rahardjo, Siti Musdah Mulia, Yenny Wahid, Zuhairi Misrawi, Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, Syafiq Hasyim.

This anger of sober intellectual like Prof. Magnis-Suseno in his writing is accentuated in an international institutional level by noticing Human Rights Watch Report 2012, evaluating events in 2011, especially “freedom of religion” issue, in particular, GKI Yasmin’s case, filling two out of 6 pages-long of the summary report. It is written on the summary report that “In 2011 religious violence surged, particularly against Christians and Ahmadiyah, a group that considers itself Muslim but that some Muslims consider heretical. In January the Supreme Court ordered the reopening of a

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21 See KOMPAS, January 17th 2012, p. 6
22 See Article 18 of UDHR, “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.” Compare with Indonesian Constitution (1945), article 29 verse 2; Indonesian Law No. 39/1999 (Indonesian Law Concerning Human Rights), article 4 and 22.
23 For the complete document, see and download at http://putusan.mahkamahagung.go.id/putusan/8c80c7a2b332938f1903b9d38f1f73f5
24 See one interesting article on his observation and recommendation on the importance of promoting multicultural education to prevent religion-claimed violence in Indonesia, at http://wahidinstitute.org/berita/Detail/?id=451/ht=Id/Redam_Kekerasan_Agama_Dengan_Pendidikan_Multikultural
Presbyterian church known locally as GKI Yasmin, overturning the Bogor administration’s ruling which had revoked the church’s building permit. However, Bogor Mayor Diani Budiarto refused to comply. Government ministers offered the church “relocation.” In October an Islamist organization began to harass churchgoers who were holding Sunday services on a sidewalk outside the sealed church. Senior government officials—including Minister of Religious Affairs Suryadharma Ali, Home Affairs Minister Gamawan Fauzi, and Minister of Human Rights and Law Patrialis Akbar—continued to justify restrictions on religious freedom in the name of public order.”

These credible voices on the bleak future of freedom of religion in Indonesia, thus threatening the multiculturalism paradigm and attitude already in-built since the formation of Indonesian Republic, are currently detailed in a more academic fashion by Setara Institute and The Wahid Institute. Both non-governmental institutions are committed to promoting and promulgating fundamental human rights in Indonesia, including but not limited to “freedom of religion.” We will analyze these two institutions’ finding and research later in the analysis section.

Online politics: the general framework

As indicated by Manuel Castells in his book, The Internet Galaxy (2001), contemporary politics today are stepping into a new terrain, the new political dynamics, the online realm called “informational politics” (Castells 2001:156), thanks to the use and the significant role the Internet has played for the last few decades. The reason behind this new phenomenon in political realm is because “the internet provides a horizontal, non-controlled, relatively cheap, channel of communication, from one-to-one as well as from one-to-many. The Internet offers extraordinary potential for the expression of citizen rights, and for the communication of human values. The Internet brings people into contact in a public agora, to voice their concerns and share their hopes” (Castells 2001:157, 164). Richard Rogers, a Web epistemologist, also highlights this new trend of informational politics by making a sharp distinction


27 see the official website at http://wahidinstitute.org; see also its 2011 annual report on the freedom of religion issue at http://wahidinstitute.org/files/docs/LAPORAN%20KEBEASAN%20BERAGAMA%20DAN%20TOLERANSI%20TWI%202011.pdf

28 Other notable characteristics of using internet as a political tool includes, but not limited to, “ease, speed, reach, and interconnection” (see http://www.epolitics.com/2006/07/03/the-internet-as-a-political-tool/)
between back-end and front-end politics, in which the back-end deals with “how a search engine or portal selects and indexes its information”, while front-end engages with “political analysts’ principles of inclusivity, fairness, and scope of representation,” as “a crucial test for the state of the Web” (Rogers 2005:1-2). All of these models of informational politics once again underline the importance of “alternative accounts of reality” in order to check and re-check the question of power in shaping, defining, and portraying virtual reality.

Nevertheless, though Internet brings new dimension to politics, as more (lay) people are increasingly engaged to interact among them and to voice their concerns, previously dominated by mass media or by the government’s means of communication, the question of credibility of politics, broadly and etymologically defined as “the art, the education, the law, and the reward” easily pops up when coming into terms with online politics as such, especially due to the swarming of highly individualized blogs and radical websites. I will return with further analysis on these “radical websites” and their implications for multiculturalism online shortly.

Particularly speaking, online politics is one sure way to communicate power in a softer way, compared with the real politics heavily relied upon mass organizations as well as mass movements. Castells projects this idea regarding the dynamics structure of communication power in contemporary society in his widely-acclaimed book, Communication Power (2009). In his opening statement, he said that “Power is more than communication, and communication is more than power. But power relies on the control of communication, as counter-power depends on breaking through such control. And mass communication, the communication that potentially reaches society at large, is shaped and managed by power relationships, rooted in the business of media and the politics of the state. Communication power is at the heart of the structure and dynamics of society.” (Castells 2009:3). This dimension of communication power in current online politics, as aptly highlighted by Castells, is also relevant with the need for multicultural dialogue between different cultures constituting society as well as enacting democratic public sphere. Power, if communicated with tolerance and sympathetic attitude, would yield to respect and admiration from other parties. On the other hand, power should also be balanced and controlled due to its potency to be corrupted, as famously written by Lord Acton in his letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton (1887). This contestation between sources of power (power and counter-power), by using the critical multiculturalism paradigm as the analytical tool, in online political realm within Indonesian context is the specific focus of this study we will further pursuit.

What about New Media? In what ways online politics are influencing as well as influenced by the emergence of this so-called “new” media?

First of all, for a rough sketch, some notes from Kim Veltman, Scientific Director of VMMI (Virtual Maastricht McLuhan Institute), is particularly interesting. In order to understand new media, he reminds us in his latest book (2006), Understanding New Media: Augmented Knowledge and Culture, “We need somehow a combination of the American profit motive, the European historical and multicultural social motive, and

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the Japanese quest for a new kind of knowledge, which combines ancient samurai concepts such as *kaizen* with the latest technological advances.” By combining these three approaches and *leitmotifs* to new media rising status and complexities, we could then finally hope that “balance in complexities” is what really matters here. *New media* is not about luddite vs. non-luddite31, nor it is about the latest technological progress and gadgets. *New media* are essentially five-fold consequences of networked computers, or we may just simply call it “five dimensions”. They are, “A first is technological; they lead to invisibility. A second is material; they lead to virtuality. A third consequence is organizational; they lead to systemicity. A fourth is intellectual; they can lead to a new contextuality. Finally, at a philosophical level we suggest that they could lead to a new spirituality.” These five-dimensions of *New Media* are in resonance with Lev Manovich’s five general principles of *New Media*, as described in his book, *The Language of New Media* (2001)32, namely: numerical representation, modularity, automation, variability and cultural transcoding (Manovich 2001:44, 49 – 65).

For the sake of brevity, I will not go into details on each of these five dimensions or five principles of *New Media*. Rather, I will show that some of the consequences of these characteristics of *New Media* as detailed by Veltman and Manovich ultimately yields to the understanding that (1) politics in *New Media* era are politics heavily nuanced by the just-in-time, always changing forms of representation(s), thanks to the variability and virtuality principles. What we, as citizens (old political geographical term) and netizens (new political cyberspace term), need to anticipate in this kind of politics is that constant observation and alarming awareness on “changes” should always be on guard, knowing that what appears on-screen (political statements, news, claims, etc) could easily be corrected and revised, by moderator of the websites as well as by users’ feedback and comments. (2) politics using *New Media* multi-platforms of (re-) presentations are politics at inter-cultural, inter-ideology cross-roads, synthesizing as well as combining text, hypertext and hyperlinks, videos, pictures, graphics, in a kind of interactivity ways of sharing. Thus, they are not monologue, monograph, and one-directional way of politics, as commonly practiced and used in propaganda times (such as totalitarian regime in European countries as well as authoritarian regime in Indonesia during Soeharto’s reigning period) several decades ago.

**Why choosing “Critical Multiculturalism” paradigm?**

The question above is very important to introduce at the beginning of this section. There are quite many strands or varieties of “multiculturalism” out there---a healthy sign of a certain progress of idea and discourse related, but can also be interpreted as a political ideology in search of solid foundation and common platform---and we should carefully make some distinctions before picking one (or two) of them, finding it useful to support one’s claim toward a certain goal, and then using it as analytical tool.


32 See the online version of Manovich’s book, *The Language of New Media*, in http://www.manovich.net/LNM/Manovich.pdf
It is not my purpose here to join into lengthy discussion about varieties of or approaches to multiculturalism, as already worked upon by many renowned theorists of multiculturalism such as Will Kymlicka, Charles Taylor, Andrew Heywood, Bhikhu Parekh, Steven Vertovec, Gerard Delanty, Eugenia Siapera, among others. With regards to the highly complex nature as well as contested meaning(s) of “culture,” also by looking at the issue at stake in this study (critical multiculturalism in online politics), it would be sufficient to say that both liberalism conception of multiculturalism as well as communitarian notion of multiculturalism, with postmodern, feminist, post-colonial, and post-structuralism strands challenging them both, are contributing fairly towards the formation and the development of critical multiculturalism.

There are at least two different but complementing ways to understand “critical multiculturalism”. The first one is coming from cultural and political analysis, the second from pedagogy/education.

33 See Kymlicka’s famous and one of the earliest distinctions of “multiculturalism” as related with the state in his book (1995). *Multicultural citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Kymlicka made a distinction between "Multinational states" (states in which a "national minority" lives) and “Polyethnic states” (states that experience immigration). Though later criticized by fellow multicultural theorists, this distinction is useful in categorizing multiculturalism in terms of “movement of people with their embedded nationalities and/or ethnicities.”


35 See his three varieties of multiculturalism, namely: Liberal multiculturalism, Pluralist multiculturalism, and Cosmopolitan multiculturalism, in http://andrewheywood.co.uk/documents/Multiculturalism,%20Identity%20and%20Diversity.doc [pp. 6 – 7]

36 Parekh’s version of various multiculturalism(s) as read and interpreted by Prof. Azyumardi Azra (see Ujan, et al. (2009), pp. 15 - 16) includes: (1) Isolationistic multiculturalism (*multikulturalisme isolasionis*), (2) accommodative multiculturalism (*multikulturalisme akomodatif*), (3) autonomist multiculturalism (*multikulturalisme otonomis*), (4) critical multiculturalism (*multikulturalisme kritikal*), and (5) cosmopolitan multiculturalism (*multikulturalisme kosmopolitan*). See also in http://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multikulturalisme


39 See her accessible and updated analysis on “varieties of multiculturalism” (chapter 3) in her latest book, (2010). *Cultural Diversity and Global Media: The Mediation of Difference*. Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 29 – 45. Table 3.1 on p. 45 is really helpful for readers to understand the typology of multiculturalism (in two big headings: rhetorics and policies) in European and North American countries (such as Germany, UK, Spain, France, Netherlands, USA and Canada), with their special characteristics, compared with multiculturalism in India and Nigeria, which is relatively different in characteristics.
One of the leading social theorists today, Douglas Kellner includes “critical multiculturalism” in his conception of contemporary cultural and media studies within the period of modernity and post-modernity. In chapter 3 of his book *Media Culture* (1995), titled, “For a cultural studies that is critical, multicultural, and multiperspectival,” he is convinced that "A critical social theory and cultural studies that attacks oppression and strives for social equality is necessarily multicultural and seeks to attend to differences, cultural diversity, and otherness. It [a critical multicultural approach] involves analysis of relationships of domination and oppression, the way stereotyping works, resistance on the part of stigmatized groups to dominant representations, and the struggle of these groups to represent themselves, to counter dominant and distorting representations, and to produce more positive ones." (Kellner 1995:95). Practitioners and promoters of critical multiculturalism in today's media culture should also be sensitive in their way(s) of reading and interpreting politics as well as political, social and economic situations. As Kellner points out, it is not enough to just read the socio-political and economic context with naïve perspective, but we need to see beyond that, explicitly “seeing how the internal constituents of its texts either encode relations of power and domination, serving to advance the interests of dominant groups at the expense of others, or oppose hegemonic ideologies, institutions, and practices or contain a contradictory mixture of forms that promote domination and resistance.” (Kellner 1995:96)

Embarking upon these ideas of critical multiculturalism seen from cultural and political analyses, one is tempted to ask, to what end does “critical multiculturalists” orient its raison d’être? Or, to be precise, which kind of persons are critical multiculturalists taking side with in order to manifest some tenets and beliefs mentioned above? One passage from Pavel (Sleeter 1995: 3) is so touching it is worth re-writing here again, “Those who promote a critical multiculturalism are deeply concerned with the empowerment of those who have no voice, those who toil, those who live unappreciated, and those who die in silence.” In the realms of online politics within the New Media frame, those “who have no voice” are those who do not update one’s status and standing regarding social, cultural, economic and political current issues. “Those who toil” are people who earnestly maintain one’s connectivity to other links and pages, even those which are opposites and contradictories, because even in their differences, one could always find something to learn, to respect, and to share. “Those who live unappreciated” are people who are out of reach of Internet connection, those living on the brink of digital divide camp. And “those who die in silence” are people who no longer comments on the blogs or websites, no longer gets some ‘replies’ and ‘likes,’ and no longer engage with the current updating of news and uploading of related pictures and photos and videos.

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For the second frame of way of understanding critical multiculturalism, we need to see the contribution from pedagogy and educational theory. Stephen May in his book *Critical Multiculturalism: Rethinking Multicultural and Antiracist Education* (1999) suggests that despite its socialization and popularization within USA context during 1960s and 1970s, multiculturalism education still has many home works unfinished, such as “largely negligible impact to date on the life chances of minority students, the racialized attitudes of majority students, the inherent monoculturalism of school practice, and the wider processes of power relations and inequality which underpin all these” (May 1999:1). Constructing within USA and UK schooling context, May is highly aware that the current multiculturalism policies applied in educational setting do not address satisfactorily some objections both from right wings as well as left wings critiques. Right wing critics (mostly orthodox liberalism) object to multiculturalism’s curricula and agenda because of its tendency and preference to corroding sense of unity and nationhood. Meanwhile the left wing critics accuse multiculturalism fail to deliver its promises to attain social equality within society and also non-discrimination milieu, especially toward minority students. After analyzing the problems and situations in a fair-like minded fashion, May then recommends three things to do in order to “develop effectively a non-essentialist politics of cultural difference”, namely: (1) to unmask, and deconstruct the apparent neutrality of civism—that is, the supposedly universal, neutral set of cultural values and practices that underpin the public sphere of the nation-state. (2) to situate these cultural differences within the wider nexus of power relations of which they form a part, and (3) to maintain a reflexive critique of specific cultural practices that avoids the vacuity of cultural relativism, and allows for criticism (both internal and external to the group), transformation, and change. In the end then, a critical multiculturalism must foster, above all, students who can engage critically with all ethnic and cultural backgrounds, including their own.” (May 1999: 33-36)

By describing these two notions of adequate understanding of critical multiculturalism, both in the socio-political context (borrowed from Kellner’s thoughts) as well as in the pedagogy and educational setting (taken from May’s ideas and recommendations), we could sum up some common characteristics that could help us to identify critical multiculturalism at work (as an analytical tool). First, it should be critical towards all kinds of claims hiding behind or under the guise of “culture”, especially when there is power relations involved, between majority and minority for instance, or even, inside the seemingly homogenous culture itself and towards one’s own ‘accepted’ culture. This criticality is important to unmasking or deconstructing the apparently given, normal, or commonly accepted norm. Second, knowing the limitation of our knowledge and comprehension in the increasingly globalized and interconnected world, the articulation of critical evaluation towards culture should also welcome the uncertainty of language used, readily embracing the “for lack of a better word” point of view as well as the “until-further-improvement” openness. Third, under the banner of politics of solidarity, critical multiculturalism should also take part in a larger context of emancipation, empowerment and struggle for justice, especially justice for people with “no voice, toil laboriously, live unappreciated and die in silence.”

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Having already explained the meaning and the scope of online politics as well as critical multiculturalism to be used in this study, let us now turn our attention to the materials to be dissected, analyzed, and reflected upon in the next section.

“Critical Multiculturalism” as Analytical Tool in Online Politics: A Study of Four Websites

For the sake of brevity and precision of comparison, the material monitored and closely examined within this study are four websites that carry the position of “pro (2 websites) and against (2 websites) multiculturalism,” namely (1) http://islamlib.com/id; (2) http://setara-institute.org (3) www.fpi.or.id; and (4) http://www.mui.or.id/

The choice of these 4 websites to represent the pro and counter ideological positions regarding multiculturalism is not without justification. There are three main reasons why these 4 websites are picked by the researcher.

First, according to Setara Institute annual report on the condition of freedom of religion in Indonesia 2010\(^2\) there are 216 records cases of violations of freedom of religion/belief, including 286 forms of violation, spreading out in 20 provinces in Indonesia (the top five provinces in terms of violations occurred are West Java = 91 cases, East Java = 28 cases, Jakarta = 16 cases, North Sumatra = 15 cases, and Central Java = 10 cases). From 286 forms of violation of freedom of religion/belief, there are 183 acts committed by citizens, including 119 criminal acts, 12 condoning acts committed by public figure, and 52 intolerance acts. From those numbers, the perpetrators are coming both from individual citizens as well as from individuals grouping under several ‘civil society’s organizations’ (Ormas). The most frequent perpetrators of freedom of religion/belief are civil society individuals or masyarakat (70 acts), MUI (Indonesian Ulemas Council = 22 acts), FPI (Islamic Defenders Front = 17 acts), GARIS (Islamic Reformist Movement = 10 acts), GERAM (Anti-Ahmadiyah Movement = 5 acts), and the rest from various organizations (less than 5 acts). What about the victim(s)? The violations of freedom of religion/belief are most frequent addressed to Christian communities (75 cases, with many forms or acts of violation). The 2\(^{nd}\) most frequent victims are Ahmadiyah communities and practitioners (50 cases). Other than those two categories, 17 individuals are also becoming victims, and the rest of the cases applied to various minority groups.

Similarly, the Wahid Institute Annual Report on Freedom of Religion/Beliefs and Tolerance 2010 and 2011 (Laporan kebebasan beragama/berkeyakinan dan toleransi 2010 & 2011) also mentions that there were 64 cases of violations of freedom of religion/belief and 135 cases of discrimination and intolerance acts during 2010 and it is increasing to 93 cases of violations of freedom of religion/belief and 184 cases of discrimination and intolerance acts during 2011. In 2011 report, the most frequent actors of intolerance are FPI (38 cases or 18%), organized mass groups (33 cases or 15%), Municipal state apparatuses (Pemkab/Pemkot 22 cases or 10%), unidentified mass (19 cases or 9%), MUI (17 cases or 8%), police officers (16 cases or 8%), individuals (14 cases or 7%), the rest of the cases are involving other parties or individuals (data not provided in percentage). Regarding the data of the victims, during 2011, Ahmadiyah communities are the most frequent target of acts of religious intolerance with 65 cases

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(26%), secondly, different individuals related with non-mainstream paradigm or norm 42 cases (17%), next are business owners or traders 24 cases (10%), Christian individuals 20 cases (8%). To give the data just given in perspective, the Wahid Institute annual report 2011 says that “2011 is the worst year for protecting freedom of religion and supporting tolerance in Indonesia, under the regime of Soesilo Bambang Yudhoyono. This is reflected on the numbers of acts of violation and intolerance which are higher than previous years [2009, 2010]. Judged from the quality, the acts of violence and intolerance in 2011 are more brutal, causing 3 deaths of Ahmadiyah practitioners and causing wounds to several others.” [p. 14].

Secondly, based on the numbers of massive acts of violence recorded by mass media for the last ten years, especially after the fall of President Soeharto, both FPI and MUI are notorious, or even, scandalous, in dealing with the fact of diversity and differences (in terms of ways of life, perspectives, beliefs and religions, as well as opinions or thoughts). They typically resort to organizing mass violence towards people and buildings (FPI) or sending out fatwas haram (MUI).

Thirdly, it is particularly interesting to note that the idea of multiculturalism (either pro or contra) plays a pivotal role in characterizing each side of the camp. Whether attacking or defending, the multicultural issues and assumptions are lying behind the chosen websites.

Both of these reports (from Wahid Institute and Setara Institute) are arranged and constructed based upon the findings and observations on the field, that is to say, the real politics. What about the online politics? What results and representations can we gather and analyze from the websites of FPI, MUI, Liberal Islam, and Setara Institute?

First of all, the academic source and resources discussing about FPI as mass organization under specific religious banner and its actions are very rare to find in the online world. When one googles “analisis + FPI”, we could only find one academic source from the first page (the first ten links), that is the undergraduate thesis from Mr. R. Alexander Mallian from Communication Science, Petra University, Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia, titled “Objektivitas pemberitaan kasus konflik Ahmadiyah dengan FPI di surat kabar Nasional”.

Secondly, due to lack of solid theoretical framework in analyzing website in terms of its pro or contra of a certain ideological position (in this matter, multiculturalism), it is highly open to construct one based upon certain prior theories and reflections. What is at stake here is the degree (depth and scope) of relevant and meaningful interpretations after observing the objects under study.

Here is the 4x4 matrix to analyze the four websites, with four indicators or parameters of existing or non-existing of “critical multiculturalism” within each website, namely: accessibility, interactivity, criticality, and solidarity (for and with

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44 See and compare these two sources regarding the birth and development of FPI in Indonesia, http://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Front_Pembela_Islam ; http://sejarahfpi.blogspot.com/

45 See http://dewey.petra.ac.id/jiunkpe_dg_11699.html
minorities). Accessibility accounts for easy access to enter the website (less than 10 seconds) as well as languages used (is it only one language or more than one?). Interactivity covers the website’s hyperlinks to other websites, including those different in perspective, as well as the numbers of comments and feedbacks from users/visitors. Criticality indicates the tone and the assumption behind the news or articles or photos or videos, whether revealed explicitly or implicitly by the author(s), and the logic principles guiding the conclusions found in articles or news. Solidarity is shown when there are some sympathetic articles or news or pictures or videos made with the purpose of defending the minorities (in terms of ethnicities, religion/belief, gender, economic, socio-political) in society at large. The simple indicator value of each parameter is low (rarely found, zero to one articles/running text/tagline), middle (two to five), and high (more than five), except for the accessibility parameter. The websites’ front page under scrutiny should also be accessed at a certain single time in order to be objective and more reliable.\(^46\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>islamlib.com/id</th>
<th>setara-institute.org</th>
<th><a href="http://www.fpi.or.id">www.fpi.or.id</a></th>
<th><a href="http://www.mui.or.id">www.mui.or.id</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactivity</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Middle(^47)</td>
<td>Low(^48)</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticality</td>
<td>High(^49)</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidarity</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seen from this simple matrix of “critical multiculturalism” indicators and parameters, we can conclude some tentative results as follows:
(1) In terms of accessibility, islamlib and setara-institute websites can be accessed using at least two languages, Indonesian and English. Meanwhile, fpi and mui websites could only be accessed using Indonesian language. The time duration to enter fully into the front-page of each website is less than 10 seconds.

\(^{46}\) All these websites are accessed by Hendar Putranto on Monday, January 30th 2012 from 6.30 – 8 PM.


\(^{48}\) These two links http://fpi.or.id/?p=saran and http://fpi.or.id/?p=kritik are without content. Other articles or news published in the websites are also without space and access to comment.

\(^{49}\) For samples of high criticality in this website, see articles and the comments below [more than 5 comments, including "consent" (pro) and "dissent" (contra)]
http://islamlib.com/id/komentar/antropomorfisme-dan-teks-suci
http://islamlib.com/id/komentar/natal-dan-islam-yang-penuh-kasih
http://islamlib.com/id/komentar/kenapa-dunia-islam-terbelakang
In terms of interactivity, islamlib offers space for users/visitors to comment on the articles published, but does not provide hyperlinks to other websites. Meanwhile, setara-institute offers some hyperlinks to other websites, nevertheless lacking in comment-space. In setara-institute, in order to comment upon opinions or articles published, one must login using password. Both fpi and mui do not provide space to comment nor to criticize news or articles published, and also, both do not provide hyperlinks to other websites.

In terms of criticality, islamlib welcomes both consent and dissent comments on its published articles and opinions from users. Most of the articles written and published in islamlib also follows rules of writing academic articles (background, problem posing, citations, etc), adequately guided by logics and critical thinking. Setara-institute published articles, news, opinions and press releases do not provide easy space to comment (therefore, it is limiting the researcher’s ability to evaluate the criticality aspects of the user comments). Nonetheless, the series of survey and research conducted (and also published and can be easily downloaded by users for free!) by this institute for the last couple of years (following standard of procedures for social research) give its criticality ranking rise. Both fpi and mui do not provide well-researched and well-constructed arguments in most of its news, opinions and articles. The nature and the tendency of the articles published in fpi are opinionated, propagandic, as well as accusative (without giving hard-proof evidence and logical congruity in the course of the premises behind the arguments, if there is any). MUI’s column for news, even though acknowledging citation from other sources (inilah.com; detik.com; republika.co.id), nonetheless do not provide space for users’ comments (therefore, unable to be evaluated in terms of its criticality). From few articles (only six) published at MUI, some are written by Islamic scholar, nevertheless, the content of the articles are lack of critical requirements (such as reflective musing or dialectical question and answer).

In terms of solidarity, it is obvious that most of the articles and opinions published in islamlib and setara-institute do voice about solidarity with minorities (religion, belief, ethnicities, social-economic disparities, etc) meanwhile those published at FPI and MUI show no signs of solidarity for and with the minorities, but rather threatening and demeaning minorities.

Having properly analyzed the content and the forms of the four websites above, using critical multiculturalism four parameters, we can conclude that both islamlib and setara-institute provide a more critical stance in promoting multiculturalism in virtual reality, in which they are accessible for both Indonesian-language and English-language users. This is an advantage for them both since promoting certain valuable issues such as protecting “freedom of religion and practicing belief” needs to be back-up from national as well as international community in order to be heard. This kind of war on discourse between the pro and the anti-multiculturalism camps are sympathetically winnable by the pro since they are more reliable in providing facts and data through survey and research. It makes sense that online politics, in order to be effectively communicated, and thus significant for social change and structural transformation, should also be equipped both with technical skills as well as critical thinking and writing skills.
Critical Multiculturalism within the context of education in Indonesia

Critical multiculturalism paradigm should be more enhanced, promoted and socialised within the context of education in Indonesia for these three related reasons:

First, celebrating diversity and recognizing differences (such as differences in religion, ethnicities, languages, races, nationalities and, to a deeper level, perspectives and ways of lives) are not enough factors on the path to build a greater appreciation on the inherent value of each human being (as promoted by many liberal multiculturalists) as well as the uniqueness (group or community rights, as promoted by many communitarian multiculturalists). For a start, “a dialectical mode of questioning that asks: Diversity to what end? In whose interest? For what purpose?” (Pavel in Sleeter & McLaren 1995: 1) is really a good starting point to build a consensus (in Indonesia we call it “musyawarah untuk mufakat”) not only in terms of among individuals within a certain group, but also expanding to inter-groups, or even, inter-religios, inter-ethnicities, inter-languages, etc. The common platform to bridge the differences along this course of consensus is ultimately Pancasila and Constitution (UUD 1945 and its amendments).

Secondly, current pedagogy in Indonesia should also be aware of the rise of New Media (multi-access, multi-platform, user-generated media, interactivity and interconnectivity among Internet users) within the context of globalization—with some respects to local considerations and local wisdom. What I mean by “being aware” here is that the current curricula, teaching and learning techniques, the plot and design for courses and researches, should be adjusted not only to the internal standards of certain education institutions, but also to the national and international standards in order to compete at a world-scale level. This bridging effort between several levels of affordable, middle, and poor schools (in terms of ‘digital divide’ quality and facilities) should also be endorsed by the Indonesian government, such as putting it into legislation and policies as well as monitoring its conduct, in collaboration with non-governmental as well as private sectors concerned with improving education levels in Indonesia.

Thirdly, based on Maykel Verkuyten study on “Everyday ways of thinking about multiculturalism”51, he puts some emphasis on the importance of multiculturalism “justified in terms of (1) personal learning and development, (2) increased tolerance, (3) equality, (4) improved mutual understanding, (5) enriching, (6) making life more exciting, diverse and interesting.”52 Based upon this list of benefits of multiculturalism, in its everyday understanding and perception, it is with all means recommended to be introduced in the formal curricula of schools, especially in conflict areas—so long as the kind of conflict involved tensions between majorities and minorities, or minorities within mainstream culture. Critical multiculturalism, for particular reasons, should also be initiated ever since elementary school level or age, since the children of today, the Z

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50 Here, I follow two complementing theoretical aspects of New Media as proposed by Lev Manovich (2001), saying that New Media is "the result of a convergence between the computational logic characteristic of the computers and the communicative logic characteristic of the media" and “that the term new signifies precisely this openness and struggle between different ideas, users, logics and so on, which seem to be part and parcel of the new media, at least at this, relatively early stage of their existence. (Siapera 2011: 5)


generation or some may call them “digital natives”\(^{53}\), are already familiar with online activities, gadgets and other electronic devices. It is more telling than before to introduce critical-thinking based multiculturalism from earliest socialization age period, aptly called “\(\text{masa bergaul},\)” since we are already bombarded with loads of information and infotainment ever since childhood, sometimes being exposed to the conflicting messages about the culture of our own and other culture(s). As a result, it takes critical capacity to differentiate between what is proper and not proper, what is proportional and unproportional, what kinds of power relations involved regarding our sense of cultural self\(^{54}\). 

**Critical Multiculturalism in Online Politics: The Culture of Unfinish and Not-Yet-Finished Multiculturalism?**

Gerard Delanty and Chris Rumford, in their article "Political Globalization"\(^{55}\), interprets the central message of Jürgen Habermas in his ambitious book, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere – An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1989; English translation). They believe that “Habermas argued that communication is an open site of political and cultural contestation and is never fully institutionalized by the state or entirely controlled by elites and their organs of political communication. The public sphere is the site of politics; it is not merely a spatial location but a process of discursive contestation.”

Though Habermas’ dislike for online world is widely cited, there are some thinkers who interpret this finding differently. There is one interesting and unique interpretation on Habermas thought regarding “reflexive publicity” (a term coined in his *Structural Transformation*\(^{56}\)) coming from Luke Goode (Goode, 2005: 111-112). He said that “With the rise of digital culture, we witness the emergence of many cultural forms and genres that, for want of a better phrase, leave threads hanging...the ‘culture of unfinish’: there are connections with other texts to be followed, there are different pathways through a text to experiment with, there are different environments and platforms to access the text through, there are comments to be posted, and so on... the ‘culture of unfinish’ may, more broadly, help to foster a sense of being more at ease with the provisional, partial and decentred nature of our ways of viewing the world.”

By using Goode’s line of argument above, we can learn two inter-related reflections with regards to our discussion on critical multiculturalism within online politics. First, the culture of unfinish as proposed by Goode prolongs the debate within

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54 One of the most fatal and worrying consequences in neglecting this critical capacity while dealing with the fact of multicultural setting is the emerging trend of radicalization among the youth groups, “acting as ‘incubators’ for new Jihadists who later become terrorists,” as reported by Harlyadi, Mathyas, "Study shows how young radical Indonesian Muslims become terrorists" accessed at [http://m.asianews.it/news/23853?l=en](http://m.asianews.it/news/23853?l=en). This report is also published at [http://setara-institute.org/en/content/study-shows-how-young-radical-indonesian-muslims-become-terrorists](http://setara-institute.org/en/content/study-shows-how-young-radical-indonesian-muslims-become-terrorists)


56 *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*. Published in German in 1962, translated into English in 1989 as *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. 
and among critical multiculturalists as to the ongoing circles of repression and resistance, tensions in relationship between majorities and minorities, as well as heterogenous ways of dealing with diversity, complexities and pluralities to some certain ends not always in harmony. Second, critical multiculturalism offers no clear end in sight, nevertheless, it is always in constant negotiation and re-negotiation until agreement reached, what Habermas called “rational consensus” (rationales Einverständnis)\(^{57}\).

**Conclusion**

In this paper, I have provided the background to understand the dynamics of multiculturalism in Indonesia, both as everyday practice(s) in a real tangible world as well as discourses and struggle for (more) power and influence in virtual reality (in this case: websites), along with its socio historical as well as socio political context, marking them as different and unique, compared with the multiculturalism debates in Europe and North America.

In my analysis of the four websites chosen to represent the anti and the pro critical multiculturalism, I have shown that typically, the anti-positions are coming from two different sources of power, namely from mass-based organization (FPI), and from the *ulama* organization MUI (selected few people, but has relatively more authoritative power in interpreting Islamic rules and rites due to their special position within Islamic tradition and legacy). Scrutinized under four markers of critical multiculturalism, it is shown that both fpi and mui websites are relatively low in rank compared with setara-institute and islamlib. One then could inductively infer that this low-rank of fpi and mui websites are caused by either technical incapability yielding to lack of interactivity and accessibility or by deliberate political intention to ward off any criticism from opposing (different points of view and attitudes regarding diversity and multiculturalism) parties and users.

A closer look at the four parameters used to analyze the chosen websites would reveal that they are far from perfect and highly open to be further elaborated in the following research(es). Nevertheless, in this particular study, they are more or less useful to classify the unit of analysis.

I have also argued elsewhere that critical multiculturalism as a certain paradigm within the big banner of multiculturalism is preferable to be chosen to analyze the current situation and dynamics of multiculturalism as shown and portrayed within *New Media* milieu, for example by using websites, due to its capacity and essential requirements to analyze critically the layers of assumptions and power relations’ tricks and games among opposing parties. The war of words and discourses are inherent part of communication power as the backbone of structure of society, as Castells has already reminded us. Habermas’ perceptive analysis in delineating public sphere in democratic regime, as creatively interpreted by Luke Goode, turning into virtual sphere (cyberspace realm), should also be welcomed as new terrain not yet fully explored and used by contemporary sociopolitical analysts in Indonesia.

The struggle of and for the future of better multiculturalism---“better” here in terms of moral attitude as well as balancing of powers from groups and parties concerned---would be on the pertinent level of reflective actions, to a varying degree with an ever-expanding scope, thanks to the rising and always updating forms of New Media.

It is believed and has also been proposed by many education theorists that today’s media literacy is also composed of ICT Literacy or some others call it “digital literacy skills”, namely “Info-Savvy, Media-Fluent, Tech-Tuned”58.

Critical multiculturalism, I have argued, could enhance this ICT literacy for today’s age given that critical thinking based on multicultural attitude and perspective should enlarge citizens capacity to reflect upon their own cultural potentials as well as limitations, in order to appreciate more on the “other” culture, whatever we apply that “other” with. “Critical” here also entails the capacity to look beyond the obvious and apparent or superficial contours of problems, and go deeper and further, finding some patterns of oppression and hegemonic forces veiling series of (normally accepted) acts of injustice and discrimination.

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