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Virtual Community and Local Civil Society Empowerment
(Study on Virtual Community in Maumere, Sikka District, East Nusa Tenggara)

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Abstract

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1. Introduction

Virtual community was born as the positive impact of the internet which is a producer of communications technology products to the community. When someone was actively connected to the Internet with all the activities such as browsing to chat and follow discussion forums then automatically that person will be entered as part of the virtual community. Because of internet rates are become more affordable and the prices of devices are getting cheaper, create virtual communities in Indonesia are increased. The topic of conversation in the virtual community is also varied so that then raises the number of virtual communities with a variety of names, a variety of purposes, and a variety of idealism. Facebook social media is one of the most widely owned by Internet users in Indonesia. Until the second quarter of 2016, the number of active Facebook users reached 88 million (http://tekno.kompas.com/read/2016/10/20/17062397/ , accessed 25 of

Oct 2016).

This kind of social media is interesting for the people of Indonesia and thrive because basically people of Indonesia are the type of people who were very happy to chat. So often, we find there are many communities that arise. Starting from the fan community of artists, technology, politics and the group of buying and selling was there. This virtual communities which is very active to share information often even managed to get on the news faster than the official reporting by the mass media.

The development of communication technology has also influenced the shape of the mass media which is showed by the emergence of online news portals that have several advantages compared to conventional print media. Among them, first, the news published in online news are more comprehensive. Digital media is able to report events comprehensively to the reader / audience. A news in the digital age not only consist of text and images, but also links to all the earlier events that started the moment of the latest relevant news. By one click, the reader can be brought to a treasure trove of digital information that can explain the history, chronology and context of the event being reported. This role is certainly not shared by the print media. Besides the digital news portal also potentially more authentic because it may include other data such as text data and photos that can add the credibility and accuracy of informationsi loaded. For example, when a legislator accused of corruption, digital media can display video or audio when the politicians were in action. The politicians can not be argued that it misinterpreted what he said, or journalists slander him, if the audio or video recording when he berate his political opponents can be displayed along with the news. Another example can be seen in case of "*papa minta saham*". The event will be much less explosive power, if there are no audio recordings that circulated widely on social media.

Second advantage is information of big data. Lately there are a lot of research that explores and displays big data. All figures health surveys, demographic surveys, census figures monitoring results for years, is now widely available as a digital data open (open data) and easily accessible on the internet. Data journalism will be the main backbone of journalism in the digital age, because this technique allows the public to access raw data intact, without the intermediary of experts, government or observer.

The third advantage that is not found in any print media is the media capabilities of online news portal to connect directly with readers. Relations or engagement between the media, journalists and readers are now entering a new era. The reader becomes part of the editorial, part of the newsroom, even a resource by providing tips, leaks, suggestions, comments, in real time, in the editorial. The unique things of this is the fixed rule in social media is that there is always more to know of us out there so that the pattern of dissemination of information in the digital age is now a multi-way, no longer only in the direction from the newsroom to the reader, but the mass media now is part of the public conversation, in which the production of information is no longer monopolized by journalists. Formerly, there is absolutely no conversation between the journalist and the reader, now the public and the media can be together formulate the news agenda, focus attention on the institutions that need to be highlighted because it is a great impact on people's lives. Not surprisingly that later there are virtual communities were emerged by the online news portal. Rheingold in Mc Quail (2012: 164) shows that virtual communities can be formed by any number of individuals via the internet on the basis of their own choice or in response to a stimulus. Communities like this one has an added advantage in principle, which is open and accessible, while the real community is often difficult to enter.

The mass media of the press and broadcast early widely viewed favorably even necessary for the operation of democratic politics. The advantage comes from the flow of information about public events to all citizens and government politicians open for public scrutiny and criticism. However, the negative impact is also seen as domination by the sound channels, typically the 'vertical current', and the high commercialism media market that resulted in neglect of the role of democratic communication.

New electronic media widely welcomed as a potential way to escape from the politics of the 'top down' oppressive of mass democracy, in which political parties are strictly organized unilaterally making policy and mobilize support behind them. Not surprisingly, there are many **media Abal Abal** emerging which aims to develop the formation of interest groups and opinion-forming. Coleman in Mc Quail (2012: 165)

shows the 'role of new media in the service of subversion of free expression under the authoritarian control requirements communication tools are not less important. Not easy for the government to control access to and use of the Internet by citizens of different opinions, but it is not impossible to do.

Freedom of the press which was born in Indonesia since 1999 contributed to the emergence of various media including the **media Abal Abal**. The digital age offers many conveniences that is easier for us to find good information correct information and misinformation, which implies the risk of widening the gap of information and increased inequality between social classes. The amount of media that appears, make the audience faced with many choices, and of course the audience choice is the media which suits their ideals, their views, their beliefs, and their hobby. The similarity of idealism, views and beliefs are almost always the background for someone to participate in disseminating news perceived support of their positions, provide confirmation of their political preferences, or a variety of other reasons, regardless of the truth of the contents of the news they distribute. Postings that they spread on this social media then reap the reaction and action from the back redistribute the content of either posts or news which previously shared, until the real action be taken to the streets. The actions appear is also diverse,either a positive impact to the community or in the form of riots or social problems in society.

In this digital era, the diversity on ethnicity, religion, customs, culture and language of Indonesia as well as the height of Internet users in Indonesia is a new challenge of the democracy life in Indonesia. Many of us see the many riots and social issues using social media as a means of communication. Tanjung Balai Medan riots case, for example. This case arose out of a request from a woman who asked one of the mosque congregation to turn down the volume of loudspeakers in mosques. The case became bigger after allegedly provocation through social media that moves the crowd to riot until combustion occurs monastery.

From this case we can see how social media in wrong way can endanger life of the nation. Social media is used as a medium for conducting mass raiser anarchy. Research conducted by replacement Indra Dewi (2016) states that the freedom of the press and social media support enable people to participate and be part of democracy. But the flow of information and social iteration in the media, in fact, also a threat to democracy itself, so that media literacy is a solution offered to reduce fanaticism, radicalism and intolerance in Indonesia. In fact, democracy is crucial in the capital development of a country or region. In spite of various shortcomings and negative impacts, the presence of the internet and social media, however, has spawned a new public space that is equal among netizens that in which none of the parties be allowed to perform manipulation, coersion and domination. However, in spite of the negative stuff on social media, social media actually also has a positive side. Christopher Mele (2005) in his article titled Cyberspace and Disadvantaged Communities: The Internet as a Tool for Collective Action shows how online networking presence will actually be used as a tool for joint action as well as empowerment.

In line with the growth of facebook users in Indonesia, people in Sikka regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province are increasing literacy using virtual media, especially social networking facebook. Group Features in this application is used as a community media gathered in a community based on certain common interests. Sikka Regency Society Facebook users have joined the virtual community of diverse topics. Some of them; *Grup Solidaritas Jurnalis Sikka, Grup TIK (Teknologi Komunikasi & Informasi) Sikka, Grup pecinta Sastra (KAHE), Forum Rakyat Pencari Keadilan (RPEKAD), Grup MauFoto, Grup Mofers Photography, Grup English Club of Nian Sikka, grup inimaumere.com* and many more groups virtual -group which is in Sikka district.

Number of members of these groups ranging from hundreds to tens of thousands of members. Group English Club of Nian Sikka is one of a new group in Sikka district that has the mission of literacy in English for its members. This group has 111 members. *Grup ini.maumere.com* a group that has quite a lot of members, ie as many as 38 592 members. Mofers Photography group consisting of 3,609 members. This group is a collection of photography lovers or those who want to learn photography. Two of the last group are two of several groups that sufficient attention on tourism in Sikka.

In this study, researchers wanted to show how people in Sikka through online discussion forums using the media community to participate in local development. Furthermore, in this study will also show how the role of virtual communities are used as tools for joint action as well as empowerment as to strengthen the government and society.

2. Methode

This research was conducted in Maumere from August-October 2016. This research used descriptive qualitative method to describe the detailed condition or process and also interrelated findings on the subject of research (Sutopo, 2006). The data gathering techniques were interview and documentation. Meanwhile, the sampling technique was a purposive sampling. Purposive sampling tends to choose the right informans who know the problems and can be trusted as reliable sources (Sutopo, 2006). The analysis used interactive model from Miles & Huberman (1992). This analysis has three analysis components namely: data reducation, data display and verification or conclusion withdrawal.

3. Result and Discussion
3.1 Virtual Communities in Sikka District

Typing the word "Sikka" searches on facebook, can display dozens of forum discussions. Starting from a political discussion forum, culture, information technology, hobby, until the forum to find friends and exchanging phone numbers (HP) and the amusing stories that developed in Sikka. This discussion forum members ranging from teenagers, college students, and adults of working age. This phenomenon shows the greater interest and awareness of Sikka people who live either in or who were outside Sikka to use social networking facebook as media gathered in a virtual community.

Discussion topics discussed in this virtual community is mixed. Sometimes still in the groove corresponding philosophical meaning groups, sometimes also out of the groove. For example, in the group Political Discussion Forum Sikka (FDPS) not only discuss politics in Sikka regency, but also sometimes talk about tourism, or other topics. But even so, the equation of these virtual groups is for "Sikka progress".

Not a bit of actions performed by virtual communities have become a real action in the real world, or become an input for the government to Sikka better. Herman Yoseph Ferdy (2015) in his study of the discourse of tourism development through facebook discovered that through discussion "Blue Print Tourism Sikka" mediated by a group FDPS which lasted from November 27, 2014 through February 13, 2015, the people of Sikka member FDPS represents their desire to involved from the planning stage in the development of tourism in Sikka regency.

Community empowerment through the virtual community is also seen in some action such as social work to clean up the beach. Departing from netizens concerns related to the behavior of littering that impact on tourism attraction in Sikka. These concerns were then led to the joint action to clean up tourist beaches in the area. Another example is raising public support NTT, especially Sikka on the appearance of Azizah, a local artist from Sikka, on the national stage. This support is the form of sympathetic posts which appears to the Sikka youth. The real action support are from fundraising to make the event to watch together (*nobar*) to almost the entire community of Sikka district gathered to watch together at the town square. Public enthusiasm for the emergence of community pride Azizah represents public pride at once showed the yearning of Flores society of the their existence on the national scene. Similar support is also given to Maria Carolina Noge, Putri Indonesia 2015 and Mario G. NTT Klau, winner of the Voice Indonesia, 2016.

Fig 1. The social action to clean up the beach travel
Source : http://www.facebook.com/inimaumere.com, accessed 26 Oktober 2016

Fig 2. Support shown to Azizah, Local artist runner up *Kontes Dangdut Indonesiaa* 2015
Source: http://www.inimaumere.com , accessed 25 of Oct 2016

As was the case in the virtual community at large, in virtual communities in Maumere is also inseparable from the spread of the pros and cons news. But what is interesting here, that there is awareness of the news production process, the awareness of being not easily provoked by the news. Here is an example of news that is shared by one of the members in the group Forum Rakyat Pencari Keadilan. This news about one charismatic figure in Maumere who is a member of the House of Representatives of Indonesia Republic. From the headlines is clear enough that is shows the positions the media related to the news about Hugo Andreas Parera.

Fig 3. The negative news about Hugo Andreas Parera, a member of Parliament from Maumere
Source: http://www.facebook.com/group , accessed 25 of October 2016

The news does not easily provoke FRPEKAD members. Some have shown awareness of the news production process that is a statement from a member named Santi Sima Gama who said "It's just the art of politics commonplace follow the flow of the Commission, now only as witnesses, sometimes the media likes to give bombastic title." Her statement shows the awareness that sometimes the media using bombastic headlines to attract the reader's attention, especially if the news published politics content.

Fig 4. Reaction of RPEKAD members on negative news.
Source: http://www.facebook.com/group , accessed 25 of October 2016

Not infrequently forums in virtual communities used as a venue for sharing knowledge. In Mofers Photography group, for example. Frequent dialogue about photographic techniques occurs between members. Sharing knowledge is not only happening in the virtual world, but also in the real world. This community conducts sharing knowledge for several times, bringing members into the real world, bringing the professionals in the field of photography. Tribhuwana Wetangterah, Photography Mofers club chairman said that virtual communities Mofers Photography formed after the formation of a real community. Mofers Photography purpose of establishing the group on FB is to facilitate communication between members. Mofers Photography members consist of those who just love the look of photographic works to professionals, such as Valentino Luis, ie, a photojournalist from Net Geo, a media industry worldwide scale. With the grub in FB, then the distance and time is no longer a constraint. Another thing that underlies the formation of this virtual group is the awareness of the development of communications media which has the function of empowerment. Tribhuwana, in an interview conducted by researchers in mid September 2016 said that photography is another way to build the area. With their photography to describe the beauty of the area.

In one of posts on the group account Mofers Photography by Jonas Jensen invites governments to look at what is done by Valentino Luis to introduce NTT world through his skill. On this post, he also hoped that the government in terms of tourism development can make coordination and cooperation with the parties – or those who engaged in tourism. Through this post Jonas also questioned the effectiveness of the program Tour de Flores held by Sikka District Government in order to introduce Sikka district in the eyes of the world, to what is done by Valentino Luis with his photography.

Fig 5. Jonas Jensen post on Mofers Photography group that questioned the effectiveness of the Tour de Flores programs and activities conducted by Valentino Luis Flores in order to introduce in the eyes of the world

Source: http://www.facebook.com/group , accessed 25 of October 2016

Fig 6. Photographs of works of Luis Valentino linked posts in the group Mofers Jonas Jensen Photography.
Source: http://www.facebook.com/group , accessed 25 of October 2016

Another reason behind the formation of Mofers Photography group is to develop the group in terms of quantity, quality of work and also to make it easier to establish relationships with other photographic community. According to Slevin in his book The Internet and Society (2000) "online communities such as this has the additional advantage in principle, open, and accessible, while the real community is often difficult to enter". With the establishment of the group Mofers Photography versions of cyberspace, it will allow people to easily enter this community.

Regional development through social media once was raised by Ferdy (2015)in the scientific paper entitled "Discourse of Tourism Development in FB group". In his study, Herman found that a facebook group become a means for the Sikka public to participate in the development of local government; remembering that the local government has not utilized social media as a means of communication to the public. The response of the government to the discussions through the media this FB newly delivered after the development discourse of the virtual space are appointed by local journalists in local print media, through closed discussions about the formulation of the blueprint for tourism development of Sikka district.

From the examples above show about the image of the virtual community in Sikka and its role in Sikka society empowerment. The role of virtual communities can not be separated from the group admin roles participated selecting allowable posts published in the group, and also the role of group members in these communities. According Sirikat Shah (2014: 14) "Today, the public creates his own voice channel through cyberspace. This is the fifth pillar, which emerged as the public's disappointment previous four pillars. In 2011 the future, this pillar will be more dominant in the world of communication settings, particularly Indonesia ".

3.2 Cyber Community as A Power

Subiakto and Ida (2012) says that the mass media is an important component for controlling the government as "power". Here the media is positioned as a "watch dog" of power that should be guaranteed freedom as the fourth estate of democracy. To make government cautious, intelligent and thoughtful.

In another context, virtual communities has been empowered the Sikka society. The social action initiated by more than one group, and it is realized in real life. Improving the quality of human resources is also conducted by some communities as MauFoto which routinely provide photography training. Not only that, this community is also frequently gave awards to the works of its members.

Fig 8. The appreciation of the best works of the community MauFoto
Source: Source: http://www.facebook.com/group , accessed 25 of October 2016

Fig 8. Knowledge Sharing in MauFoto virtual community
Source: http://www.facebook.com/group , accessed 25 of October 2016

3.2 Group Cohesiveness in Virtual Communities in Maumere

Cohesiveness is the strength of the interaction of members of a community. The forms of cohesiveness itself can be realized in the form of interaction between members of the community, freedom of expression, enthusiasm and responsibility towards the community. Cohesiveness is then becoma the factor of a community endurance. Not a bit of virtual communities in cyberspace that torpor. Cohesiveness is also later became an important element in the movement of the community.

McDavid and Hariri in Rachmat (2009, p. 164) argues cohesiveness can be measured by three things, namely the existence of interest among members in interpersonal, interested members on the activities and functioning of a community, and the extent to which members are interested in the community as a means to satisfy the needs of personal. From interviews to several members of the virtual community of some virtual communities in Maumere, it can be concluded that keeps them interacting in virtual communities because of the activities and functions of their communities positive value. In addition to adding their insight and knowledge through virtual communities that they can connect with a variety of people with all its advantages, as well as the average virtual communities also hold offline activities such as social events, training, or talk face to face. In some communities were also found how community members feel the satisfaction of personal needs through community activities. In general, this happens in a community that has similarity hobby like photography. Coupled with the appreciation of which are regularly held by the community, so as to make community members more motivated to work better.

Forsyth (2010)explanation of the components required in the formation of a community is very relevant to explain how community cohesion is a decisive factor permanence of a community and then

also how this community can contribute to the empowerment and development. Some of the components include social cohesion cohesiveness, task cohesion, perceive cohesion, and emotional cohesion.

Social cohession is the attraction between members of the community as a form of forming a community as a whole. Cohesiveness is a multi-level process where community members to one another can be engaged. At the individual level, members of the community found himself in the community, the community members have personal relationships between members of the community. At the community level, community members have a greater interest in a community. Community members will tend to remain in the community. Virtual communities member in Maumere are not only the original from Maumere, but also migrants who live in Maumere, as well as indigenous people who live outside of Maumere Maumere. The word "Maumere" or "Sikka" is the main attraction for the members and the reason for them to join. Longing for home, the dream of their areas to get better and developed and better known by the outside community is also a reason for keeping the peace in cyberspace.

Task cohesion is unity of community members focused on the task assignment depend on the cooperation shown by every member of the community to coordinate their efforts and collective every eficacy of the community. Collective eficacy is a conviction, so that community members develop and carry out tasks for the common goal successfully. It seems obvious to the hobby-based community such as Mofers Photoraphy or MauFoto. Several offlinw activities have been carried out successfully. This success can not be separated from the consciousness of each member to be responsible for duties and also solid cooperation among the members.

Perceive cohesion is a relationships disintegrater within a community, a feeling of unity and togetherness in the community. In perceive cohesion, each member of the community saw a member of the community as a whole. Every member of the community was recognized in the community as an identity. Form of recognition is expressed in the form of appreciation of the work or through a link on the positive activities undertaken members. Mentioning one of the account is a form of recognition to the linked.

Fig 9. Tag name on the account of community members.
Source: http://www.facebook.com/group , accessed 25 of October 2016

Emotional cohession is a form of positive togetherness in a community. This positive togetherness at the end gives a positive effect, ie, improving personal performance, and improving survival in communion. Offline activities such as social events, and sharing together is one of the media for the group to increase the positive unity for the sake of the activity of the community and also the survival of the community.

3.3 The real role of virtual community in society empowerment and local development

Virtual communities in Maumere, like most other virtual communities, in addition to creating a public space in the virtual world is also creating spaces together physically in the public domain in accordance with the purpose and vision of their own. Through the virtual world such as social media, community members interact and communicate that form of dialogue and discourse until they finally decided to do the offline activity or movement. With online and offline meeting of the joint space in the public sphere is created.

New public spaces created by these online communities, each of which has a goal and a positive vision. Any positive activities designed to achieve the goals and vision, though not all communities have a clear vision and mission, but they have one thing in common which is the love of their area, Sikka District. Activities conducted both online and offline from some of the examples mentioned above, either directly or indirectly contain empowerment activities. Empowerment is "*proses, cara, perbuatan membuat berdaya, yaitu kemampuan untuk melakukan sesuatu atau kemampuan bertindak yang berupa akal, ikhtiar atau upaya*" (Depdiknas, 2003). Empowerment is in the sense of language is a process, a way, the act of making power, namely the ability to do something or the ability to act in the form of

sense, initiative or effort. Koentjaraningrat (2009) gives definition on Society as the unity of human life that interact according to a certain customs system that is continuous, and which is bound by a sense of shared identity. In several studies on community development, community empowerment is often interpreted as an effort to provide power to make their voices heard in order to contribute to the planning and decisions that affect the community.

Conceptually derived from the word power means power or empowerment. The concept of empowerment originated from social capital gains in public (group) that includes strengthening social capital,trust, comply rules, and Network. If we already have a strong social capital, we will easily steer and adjust (direct) public and easily transfer knowledge to the community. By having a strong social capital then we will be able to strengthen knowledge, capital (money), and people. In the virtual community, the community itself was already a social capital. The greater the number of members of the greater social capital. Until then how to turn the community is to transfer knowledge to the community. This concept implies that the concept of community empowerment is transfering power through the strengthening of the group's social capital to make productive groups to achieve social welfare. Strong social capital will ensure suistainable in building a sense of trust in the community, especially members of the group.

They use the power of community with bottom-up planning which will continue to grow, after planning with top-down methods continually 'failed' to provide the needs of the public space. But intuitively, this grassroots movement should remain informal. These communities should remain as a community with their actions that though it may be informal but should be able to influence policies and legalities that are formal. This character should be maintained as a bipolar system and the opposition; community and owners of capital with the government. With this dualism, the two entities will continue to grow and evaluate each city and its policies; as a round of appropriation, re-evaluation and continuous urban design.

3.4 Social media as a means of strengthening communities and government

Offline activities which are initiated from these virtual communities to form a sympathetic movements and good cooperation and also emerge on the spirit of empathy that grows within each community Maumere community. This empathetic spirit was then create a new force within the community. The new force called civil society. In realizing this civil society is needed number of prerequisites. This prerequisite is an integral unity, and became the basis for the strengthening of civil society.

The first prerequisite is a free public sphere or Habermas call public sphere where there should be a free public space as a means of expression. Social media as a modified form of conventional media has been giving free public access to this sphere. Virtual communities that exist in Maumere have been able to use social media as a vehicle for interaction, engaging through meaning-meaning, forming a strong access to the so-called civil society.

The next prerequisite is the democratic attitude and democratic legitimacy expression. It seems from the common vision (to see a better Sikka), without seeing the differences of race, class, ethnicity or religion. The next requirement is a spirit of tolerance and pluralism to respect and accept pluralism in everyday life. Media literacy skills shown by some members of the community to participate in keeping the discussion in a conducive environment. Judging from the number of requirements to form a civil society proposed by Habermas can be concluded that the condition of the existence of the public sphere becomes crucial. Society must have a public space, whether it be real visible in social life or virtual, which can be obtained through social media.

Democracy as a place for social movements are expected not to be a manifestation of the theory of hegemony as expressed by Gramsci. Gramsci said that hegemony is a way of life or a way of thinking

that is predominant in which there are process control of the dominant class to the lower class and the lower class also actively supports the ideas of the dominant class. Mastery done not by force but through consent dominated society. This hegemony is a twit proverbial structured towards a democratic process.

The existence of social media seen from the positive side could also be one of the media's education and has a wide range of human resources quality improvement, for the region's development with community empowerment. Media literacy is also necessary so that the negative sides of social media can be minimized.

4. Conclution

The role of virtual communities in community empowerment and development has been demonstrated by the average virtual communities in Maumere. Discourses of empowerment, development in discussions delivered through virtual communities are generally followed up in concrete activities that have a positive impact both to the community members and the wider community. Cohesiveness between members of virtual communities in Maumere be one factor involvement of these communities on community empowerment. In addition, the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and use of the media has been owned by members of the community remain conducive helped maintain both online and offline activities. This condition is helped create a democratic public space which is crucial element in either national or local development.

Namun demikian, dalam penelitian ini belum melihat perhatian pemerintah terkait peran dan potensi komunitas virtual di media sosial dalam pemberdayaan masyarakat dan pembangunan daerah

5. Suggestion

In this study, researchers have not yet see the attention of Sikka district government related to the role and potential of virtual communities in the social media community empowerment and local development, the researchers found it necessary in order to further research can take from the standpoint of the government point of view of the social media. Besides object of this study are some of the virtual communities so that the results obtained are in the form of an overview. With the objects of research it is expected that the results obtained will be deeper and focused. Research on social media is the new thing today, it is actually a lot of aspects that can be examined by looking at the deficiencies in this study.

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