

Media Use and Mediatization of Transnational Political Participation: The Case of  
Transnational Indonesians in the United States

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of the requirements for the degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

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This dissertation titled  
Media Use and Mediatization of Transnational Political Participation: The Case of  
Transnational Indonesians in the United States

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## Abstract

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Media Use and Mediatization of Transnational Political Participation: The Case of Transnational Indonesians in the United States

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This dissertation explores the interplay between diasporic life of transnational Indonesians in the United States and their use of media to engage in the long-distance politics of their home country. It aims to investigate how, and to what extent, that people in diaspora use media to perform mediatization of transnational-homeland politics. In this dissertation, I also exemplified the theory of mediatization of politics by examining the appropriation of various media platforms by Indonesian diaspora in two metropolitan areas, Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles, both in their electoral and non-electoral political engagement. Utilizing a multi-sited media ethnographic, which includes ten months of participant observations and thirty in-depth interviews between October 2014 and July 2015, I examine the complexity of Indonesian diaspora's relationship with media and transnational politics.

In my empirical chapters, in addition to the discussion of increasing availability of homeland media content in diaspora, I analyze how the presence of diaspora spaces enabled these displaced nationals to foster their sense of community, which eventually would help them to maintain their relationship with their country of origin's matters, including politics. While Indonesian diaspora exhibited dual-nature of media use, accessing both host land and homeland media, it was the consumption of homeland

political news that I found as the most prominent practice demonstrated by overseas Indonesian to mediatize their long-distance political participation. Furthermore, in various diasporic political engagements, media practice was not only amalgamated with non-media political activism, but to some extent, also was considered to be the preexisting condition of transnational Indonesians' involvement in their home country's political sphere.

Finally, this dissertation argues that the degree of mediatization of transnational politics was amplified by both media and non-media factors. While media factors included structural and individual elements, such as media and audience availability, non-media factors were associated with the issues of homeland and host land conditions, where each factor should be understood as interrelated. Despite some variations, most of people in diaspora had an equal chance to participate in home country's politics due to the availability of Indonesian political content, mainly through online and social media, which highlights the multifaceted mediatization of politics of diasporic community.

## Dedication

*For Dessy Dristy Herawati*

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study could contribute to their efforts in maintaining a stronger relationship with the Indonesian political processes, regardless their distance from their beloved homeland.

Finally, I want to dedicate this dissertation to my wife, Dessy Dristy Herawati, who supported me throughout the ‘darkest days’ of the academic life in the United States. My warmest appreciation goes to my family back home in Indonesia, my parents, Turut Arief and Hartati (and also my parents-in-law), who have been patiently waiting for their son to finish his study and return home.



## Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract.....	iii
Dedication.....	v
Acknowledgments.....	vi
List of Tables .....	xii
List of Figures.....	xiii
Chapter I Introduction.....	1
Overview of the Study .....	3
Personal Perspective on the Research.....	10
Structure of Dissertation .....	17
Chapter II Transnational Mobility of Indonesians: Historical Overview of the Indonesian Transnational Migrations .....	22
Pre-Modern Indonesians' Transnational Mobility .....	24
Colonial-Influenced Indonesians' Migration .....	29
Human Mobility and Long-Distance Politics in the Post-Independence Indonesia .....	47
The Moluccan diaspora in the Netherlands .....	48
The story of Sukarno's students .....	51
Long-distance politics of Acehnese diaspora .....	54
Indonesian Migrations to the United States.....	59
Summary.....	66
Chapter III Literature Review.....	69
Relationship Between Diaspora, Transnationalism and Media .....	70
Why diaspora matters?.....	70
Understanding transnationalism.....	74
Diaspora, transnational practice and media .....	77
Transnational Political Engagement and Media Use.....	83
Understanding transnational politics.....	83
Determining factors of long-distance politics.....	89
Media use for political participation .....	97
Media's role in political communication.....	97

Political participation in a newer media environment .....	100
Mediatization Theory and Political Sphere .....	106
Conceptualizing mediatization.....	106
Mediatization of politics .....	112
Why Studying Indonesian Diaspora's Transnational Politics? .....	117
Summary.....	121
Chapter IV Media Ethnography in a Multi-Sited Setting: Methodological Issues in Researching Indonesian Diaspora in the United States .....	123
Media Ethnography as Research Method .....	124
Multi-Sited Approach for Studying Transnationalism .....	126
Insider-Outsider: The Problem with Native Ethnography .....	133
Doing Fieldwork in Two Metropolises: Experiencing the Field and Self-Reflexivity	139
Chapter V Setting the Scene: The Indonesian Diaspora in Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles Metropolitan Areas .....	159
Socio-Demography of the Indonesian Diaspora in Washington, D. C. ....	161
The Indonesian Embassy and transnationalism from above.....	165
IMAAM Center as the religious hub for the Indonesian Muslim diaspora .....	171
The Indonesian Diaspora in Los Angeles Metropolitan Area .....	176
Transnational migration pattern of Indonesians in Southern California.....	180
Their very own Indonesian media.....	186
The diasporic public space and transnational activism.....	188
Trans-Local Connections Between the Indonesian Diaspora in Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles .....	193
Summary.....	196
Chapter VI Diasporic Media Use and Homeland Political Participation .....	198
Diaspora Media Use in Everyday Practice .....	200
Television in the diaspora's living room.....	200
Print media: Still present but becoming less relevant.....	209
Online media: Displacement and/or enhancement of other media .....	214
The importance of the latest smart phones .....	217
Indonesian Diaspora and the Homeland Media .....	222
The use of media to access content from the home country .....	222

Nostalgia of the present-past? The motives of homeland media use .....	231
Consuming Indonesian Political News from Diaspora.....	236
Social Media and the Networked Diaspora .....	244
Summary .....	252
Chapter VII Celebrating (Mediatized) Homeland Politics from Afar .....	254
Participation in Electoral Politics .....	255
Membership in home country political institutions .....	256
Take part in national election campaigns.....	263
Vote in the home country elections .....	271
Indonesian Diaspora's Non-Electoral Political Participation.....	279
Engagement in diaspora-homeland associations .....	279
Lobbying and campaigning for homeland political issues .....	285
Attending politics-related public meeting.....	294
Summary .....	302
Chapter VIII Mediatization of Transnational-Homeland Political Participation and Its Determining Factors.....	304
Exemplifying Four Phases of Mediatization Through Diaspora Media Use.....	305
Extension phase .....	306
Substitution phase .....	308
Amalgamation phase.....	309
Accommodation phase.....	311
Factors Determining the Degree of Mediatization of Transnational Political Participation .....	313
Media-related dimensions .....	314
Structural factors .....	315
Individual factors .....	318
Non-media dimensions .....	320
The homeland-related conditions.....	320
The host country's conditions.....	325
Problematizing Mediatization of Transnational-Homeland Politics .....	330
The problems with following (homeland) media logic.....	330
Diaspora as displaced transnational audience (of homeland politics) .....	337

Giving Voice to the Voiceless: Opportunities and Challenges of Mediatization of Politics .....	345
Conclusion: Expanding the Study of Mediatization of Transnational Politics.....	350
Summary .....	351
Implications for future research .....	359
References.....	365
Appendix A: Ohio University Consent Form .....	422
Appendix B: Interview Guide.....	428

## List of Tables

	Page
Table 2. 1. Some states where Indonesians live.....	65
Table 5. 1. The Asian population in Los Angeles Metropolitan Area.....	178
Table 5. 2. The Indonesian population in Southern California.....	179

## List of Figures

	Page
Figure 5. 1. IMAAM Center Mosque in Silver Spring, Maryland. ....	174
Figure 6. 1. Television hanging on the wall of Indo Kicthen Indonesian restaurant in Alhambra, Los Angeles, connected to a <i>Nusan TV</i> decoder and Indonesian television channel <i>Berita Satu</i> was displayed on the screen. ....	225
Figure 6. 2. The Indonesian Service of <i>Voice of America</i> 's news report of <i>nonton bareng</i> the inauguration of the Newly Elected Indonesian President, Jokowi on October 20, 2014 in Washington, D. C. Adapted from Diaspora Nonton Pelantikan Jokowi-JK. (October 20, 2014). <i>The Voice of America</i> . Retrieved from <a href="https://youtu.be/6teGZuAV7ns">https://youtu.be/6teGZuAV7ns</a> . ....	240
Figure 7. 1. A Friday prayer on the lower floor of the Indonesian Consulate General in Los Angeles where the <i>khotib</i> (preacher) gave a reminder that homeland political event should not divide the <i>ummah</i> (the people) in diaspora. . ....	269
Figure 7. 2. The 2014 Indonesian Presidential Election Ballot. There were two pairs of candidates for the President and Vice President seats. The first pair, Prabowo Subianto and Hatta Rajasa took the serial number 1, while the second pair, Joko Widodo and Jusuf Kalla, was assigned the serial number 2 .....	273
Figure 7. 3. Indonesian diaspora meeting at the Embassy of Indonesia, Washington, D. C. on May 20, 2015 to discuss the strategies for pushing the Indonesian government and lawmakers to implement <i>Undang-Undang Dwi-Kewarganegaran</i> (the Dual-citizenship Law). ....	296
Figure 7. 4. Ridwan Kamil, the Mayor of Bandung, presenting his political-development achievements to members of Indonesian Muslim diaspora in the IMAAM Mosque, Washington, D. C. metropolitan area. The meeting was held on May 31, 2015 .....	300
Figure 8. 1. Four phases of mediatization of (transnational) politics .....	306
Figure 8. 2. Mediatization of transnational politics and its determining factors .....	314

## Chapter I: Introduction

On a hot summer night in early July, 2014, some friends and I were gathered in a small dining room temporarily modified into a TV room in the Athens, Ohio, home of a member of the Indonesian diaspora. Traditional Indonesian dishes, such as chicken satay and fried tempeh, were served for dinner. In the corner, the computer, through the online streaming service, *Mivo TV*, was tuned to an Indonesian television channel. Cups of dark roast Sumatran coffee were temporarily ignored as all eyes were on the screen, watching people in Indonesia casting votes in the 2014 Presidential Election. The election had attracted a wide attention, not only of people in the homeland but also of Indonesians in diaspora. They were facing a difficult choice between two presidential candidates: Joko Widodo (Jokowi) and Prabowo Subianto, in one of the most polarizing elections in the post-authoritarian Indonesia (Bollier, 2014).

The mood was fine at the beginning of the show. But as time passed, the television station began to provide preliminary voting results from several provinces in Eastern Indonesia, which had cast the earliest votes. Taufik, one of the attendances predicted, “I believe the result will be tight.” Others, supporters of Jokowi, laughed and said that he was too optimistic with his prediction. Everyone thought Taufik supported Prabowo. Encouraged by the laughter, the host was unable to hold his own opinion any longer and offered his own speculation, “I’m sorry, but I think this time Jokowi will win the election.” Offended by the host’s opinion, Taufik returned with a counterargument that Prabowo would definitely win. Predictably, the political disagreement began to intensify. Both parties continued to provide their own rationales of why their candidate should win the presidency, typical of any debate among Indonesians about political

issues. They later browsed their smartphones for news articles to support their claims. Eventually, passive consumption of homeland political news turned into an active debate about the Indonesian election, and a mediatized political event amalgamated with a real-life political dispute.

The illustration above indicates how availability of advanced media technologies offers a wide opportunity for long-distance political engagement. Indeed, the evening described was a special event for many Indonesians, including those who live in diaspora. It was one of those rare occasions when they could join with fellow Indonesians abroad to witness a determining political process situated in the homeland. Enabled through access to home country media, a combination of live television broadcast and (relayed through) the Internet connection, people in diaspora felt they were sharing the same political sphere as the people living in their country of origin. By experiencing the homeland political process in the diaspora, even though it was filtered through the media, they felt like participants in the homeland political events, both as spectators and as commentators. To some extent, the members of Indonesian diaspora considered this practice as a way to further engage in the transnational politics of the home country. In some cases, they even became outspoken activists, promoting various political issues both in and from the diaspora.

In this study, I want to investigate how the members of the Indonesian diaspora in the United States, especially in the two metropolitan areas of Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles, further engaged in transnational-homeland political participation through their everyday media use. As illustrated above, it can be argued that these displaced audience



members tended to exhibit both distinct and intriguing cases of multiple media appropriations as their means to participate in their home country's political processes. Yet, this phenomenon of increasing permeation of media in transnational Indonesians' homeland political involvement, by considering the changes of their media and communication environment as well as in their sociocultural environment—as encouraged by the theory of mediatization of politics (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999; Strömbäck, 2014)—has not been widely studied within the fields of media, diaspora, and transnational politics, especially in regards to transnational Indonesians. This study aims to offer one of the first attempts to empirically examine such media-centered long-distance political participation of members of the Indonesian diaspora.

### **Overview of the Study**

This dissertation project explores the multiplex relationships of transnational politics, digital media, and diasporic lives of transnational Indonesians in the US. While it can easily be understood that in today's media-saturated world people have abundant media options to access any kind of content, the reasons why people in diaspora could enjoy a significant amount of media content from their home country still need both empirical and theoretical explanations. To be more specific, I examine how members of the Indonesian diasporic communities in the US access their homeland's media, not only as a way to maintain connections with their roots, but also as a method to engage in their homeland political sphere. In this view, the diasporic experience of consuming media content from the country of origin, especially political content, will be considered as a practice of transnational political participation.

This study also uses current mediatization theory in investigating the centrality of media in transnational people's political engagement with the political sphere in their homeland. In recent years, the mediatization theory is considered as, "one of the most modern buzzwords in communication science" (Birkner, 2015, p. 454) and has become an important theoretical framework used by scholars to investigate, "transforming potential of mediated communication upon culture and society" (Lundby, 2014, p. 12). Even though this theoretical approach has been used in various societal dimensions, such as religion (Setianto, 2015), culture (Fornas, 2014; Hjarvard, 2013) and even sports (Frandsen, 2014), mediatization scholars have paid considerably more attention to the process as it operates in politics. As argued by Ampuja, Koivisto and Väliverronen (2014), "mediatization is perhaps most commonly used to describe the transformation of politics and political communication" (p. 112).

Despite increasing examination of the relationship between media and politics, most of the study on mediatization of politics focuses on the societal level. This is why it is necessary to move beyond the macro level of the investigation, mainly by allocating more empirical research to exploring mediatization of politics on a micro level, such as the way audiences increasingly rely upon media as their primary mode of political engagement. Moreover, in the case of diaspora, mediatization of politics should be seen as more complex, and thus, more challenging to be studied using this theoretical framework. Even though some scholars have studied mediatization and transnational communication in the diaspora (e.g., Hepp, Bozdog & Suna, 2012), little attention has been given to how people in diaspora demonstrate long-distance political involvement

through media. Accordingly, this research aims to address this gap by providing an evaluation of how members of the Indonesian diaspora in the U.S. mediatized their transnational-homeland political participation.

This topic is important for several considerations. Firstly, it is understood that globalization and transnationalism have influenced political conditions, especially in the case of displaced people, such as diasporic communities and immigrants (Bean, 2012; Laguerre, 2006). Since transnational Indonesians are physically distanced from their home country, most of their involvement with their homeland politics is mediated through media and other modes of communications, as with their engagement with political news during the 2014 Indonesian national election. Secondly, according to Garbin and Godin (2013), the availability of newer media technology, such as the Internet and social media, is also helping these displaced citizens to be involved in their homeland politics as well as other social movements. As a result, media are becoming important for these people not only to maintain their relationship with their homeland politics but also to center their experience of transnational political participation. In this situation, transnational Indonesians' experiences of participation with the political spheres in their home country are highly mediatized.

As previously mentioned, despite growing interest of scholars to study transnationalism, diasporic lives and media, there is still little research examining how media are being used by diaspora in their daily lives, especially to engage with their home country's politics. Instead, many previous studies on media and diasporic communities focused on the issues of negotiating identities (Kama & Malka, 2013; Kim,

2011; Leeuw & Rydin, 2007). To fill this theoretical gap, this current study aims to expand the scholarship of media and diaspora as well as transnational political participation. Focusing on transnational Indonesians living in the US, this study explores how and to what extent these displaced people use media to engage with their home country's politics. In the context of Indonesian politics, Indonesians living abroad are considered minorities. Although the Indonesian government has recently given more attention to discussion of them, Indonesians in diaspora are still marginalized in terms of their participation in Indonesian politics (Riesardhy, 2013). As a result, media become the main channel for these marginalized people to participate with their homeland political sphere.

According to Hugo (2007), as the world's fourth most populous country, Indonesia has experienced a surplus of labor mainly due to internal poor economic issues which lead to increasing desire of Indonesians to immigrate to other, more developed countries. In his study, Hugo also described how unskilled Indonesian workers tend to migrate to or to settle in Malaysia (due to geographical, cultural and religion proximities) and the Middle East countries (mainly due to religion proximity), while the largest Indonesian diaspora is found in the Netherlands, Indonesia's former colonizer. Indeed, the significant presence of Indonesian expats in the Netherlands is seen as a colonial legacy, mainly due to the colonizer's immigration policy.

Hugo (2007) further explained that the US has become the new migration destination for contemporary Indonesians. The US Census Bureau reported that in 2010 more than 95,000 Indonesians resided in this country, a number considered relatively

small since at least 4.1 million Asians live in the US (Hoeffle, Rastogi & Shahid, 2012). In addition to those transnational Indonesians, the Institute of International Education stated that 7,670 Indonesian students were studying in American universities in the 2012/2013 academic year (Institute of International Education, 2013). Compared to the Indonesian diaspora in other countries, historically, transnational Indonesians in the US have been dominated by students. According to Yang (2001), official documentation of Indonesians who migrated to the US can be dated back to the 1950s, when US-sponsored scholarships encouraged Indonesian students to enroll in American universities, mainly the University of California at Berkeley. Meanwhile, in the more recent era, Yang explained that Indonesian immigrants who moved to the US were more motivated by economic and educational factors, and thus, contributed to a more diverse population of in the Indonesian diaspora in this country. This illustration may support the assumption that the Indonesian diaspora in the US has a distinct characteristic compared to the Indonesian diaspora in other countries like in the Netherlands and Malaysia.

Previous studies on transnational communities in the Western world focused more on diaspora from the Middle East, South Asia, and East Asia (e.g., Plüss, 2013; Rinnawi, 2012; Varma, 2011); thus, little is known about transnational Indonesians. While many scholars preferred to study larger diasporic communities, such as Armenians, Somalis and Turks, Missbach (2012) argued that it is important to explore smaller and incipient diaspora. It is true that growing attention has been paid to empirical examination of Indonesians who live abroad, but the topics were limited to such issues as migrant workers (Adib, 2010; Silvey, 2006; Williams, 2008) and Indonesian Muslim diaspora

(Setianto, 2015; Widjanarko, 2007). Meanwhile, Hasyim (2014) provided an overview of Berlin-based Indonesian students' long-distance political activism from the 1960s until 2012. He briefly mentioned that in the 1970s, these student activists circulated a regular bulletin of news translated from German and English to Indonesian readers in diaspora, mainly because of limited access to Indonesian media at that time. However, Hasyim's study did not allocate much discussion to the use of transnational-homeland media for political participation by these overseas Indonesians. Hence, there is little research giving primary attention to transnational Indonesians and how they use media as a mode of transnational politics, especially in the case of Indonesians in the US.

In terms of media use, it is evident that transnational Indonesians aim to maintain their connections with either their home country or with other fellow Indonesians in diaspora. For instance, in the case of the Indonesian diaspora in Philadelphia, Adib (2010) found that the members of this community used small Indonesian-language diasporic media like the newsletter *Kabar Kilat* and the bulletin *Dunia Kita*. In addition to print media, the Indonesian diaspora began to use online media to circulate messages among their members as well as to connect with Indonesians back home. In a more recent example, members of the Indonesian Muslim Society in America (IMSA) used online *Radio IMSA* to disseminate religious messages mainly targeting the Indonesian diaspora in the US but Muslims in Indonesia are able to listen to the same programs (Setianto, 2015).

Additionally, Widjanarko's (2007) research discussed transnational Indonesian Muslims in New York City who emphasized the role of media in identity negotiation, and

found various Indonesian language media produced and distributed within this community. Widjanarko categorized these media into three different categories: intra-transnational, inter-transnational, and transnational-homeland. He explained that intra-transnational media are being produced by Indonesians living in the US, inter-transnational media outlets try to connect transnational Indonesians with current issues about other transnational communities within and outside the US, and transnational-homeland media are imported from Indonesia. The availability of wide-ranging transnational media should open a wider possibility for transnational Indonesians to further connect with their homeland as well as other transnational Indonesians in the US. Consequently, these transnational media may also amplify transnational Indonesian's political participation with the home country's politics.

This current study tries to expand these previous studies on transnational Indonesians living in the US. Even though Adib's (2010) study discussed diasporic media among Indonesian immigrants in the US, media's role was seen as insignificant. While both Widjanarko's (2007) and Setianto's (2015) studies have provided more salient examples of how the Indonesian diaspora used transnational media to negotiate identity as well as to articulate religious needs, they did not pay a significant amount of attention to the role of media in terms of participation in homeland's politics. Therefore, the current study aims to fill this theoretical gap and offers a perspective different from the previous studies by placing media at the center of transnational Indonesians' activities, especially in the context of mediatization of transnational political participation of Indonesian politics.

Moreover, some of these previous studies had taken place before the popularity of online media, which is seen as an important and new mode for circulation of political messages (Yamamoto & Kushin, 2014). In the last few years, the Internet infrastructure has changed considerably by allowing the new ways of distribution of content, thus changing how people use the media for political engagement (e.g., Campante, Durante & Sobbrío, 2013; Pautz, 2010). The interplay between online media and politics in Indonesia has been discussed by various scholars (Hill & Sen, 2005; McDaniel, 2002; Sen & Hill, 2006), with recent attention given to the use of online media, as the source of political information as well as the newest vehicle of political activism (Chen & Priamarizki, 2014; Lim, 2013; Nugroho & Syarief, 2012). As mentioned previously, Indonesians who live outside the national borders can easily access Indonesian broadcast media through free online streaming services and they can read Indonesian online news portals through mobile apps. Additionally, the role of social media as the way to obtain and to circulate political messages is becoming prominent in the Indonesian diaspora's media behavior. This advancement of technology may result in a more complex and sophisticated mode of media engagement by transnational people with their homeland politics, which demonstrates the need of further empirical examination.

### **Personal Perspective on the Research**

As part of self-reflection as a researcher, it is also important to disclose my own biographical profile before exploring further the experience of mediatized long-distance political participation of the Indonesian diaspora in the US. I will start by mentioning my previous experience with Indonesian political activism. I was personally attracted to



study the interrelationship between media and politics when I was a student in the Department of Communication Studies of Moestopo University in Jakarta back in 2000. While studying journalism, I became friends with several student activists. Through them, I became further involved in various student organizations, which were my gateway to political activism. Moreover, the campus was a base at that time for leftist student movements, such as FORKOT (*Forum Kota*, the City Forum) and FAMRED (*Front Aksi Mahasiswa untuk Reformasi dan Demokrasi*, Student's Action Front for Reformation and Democracy), as well as Muslim student organizations like HMI (*Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam*, the Association of Islamic Students) and KAMMI (*Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia*, the Association for Indonesian Muslim Student's Action). These student organizations, especially FORKOT and FAMRED, were considered radical since they allowed the use of violence in their actions and were often involved in clashes with the police. Since Moestopo University is located only 15 minutes from the Indonesian parliamentary building, it was relatively easy for students to arrange marches and protests against the lawmakers. In addition to this political activism, I occasionally joined my friends in disseminating political information through 'underground' pamphlets and photocopied magazine articles, which usually covered political issues unavailable on Indonesian mainstream media, throughout the campus.

Indonesian students' involvement in political protests actually had come to the surface prior to 1998. It began to escalate when, in May 12, 1998, four students of Trisakti University were shot dead by the police, while several others were badly injured during a protest in Jakarta, demanding that President Suharto step down from his position

following the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. Ultimately, in the May Riot(s) throughout the country in the following days, it was estimated that at least 1,000 people were killed, buildings were burned on a massive scale and there were mass rapes (“Trisakti University,” 2014). The upheaval resulted in the collapse of Suharto’s regime where he decided to surrender his presidential seat in May 21, 1998. Referring to this particular moment, Lee (2011) explained that, “the resignation of President Suharto was a landmark event for the student movement” (p. 937). However, even after Suharto’s dismissal the student movements did not end, but continued in the post-1998 period.

In the early 2000s, the focus of the student movement was to monitor the transparency of the newly elected government. The new president, Abdurrahman Wahid, popularly known as Gus Dur, later was accused of being involved in corruption scandals. Along with my fellow activists, I was intensely involved during this particular period, joining various student protests in front of the presidential palace to demand that Gus Dur be dismissed from his position. Most of the time, we were forced to disperse by riot police using rubber bullets, tear gas, and even water cannons. We also faced attacks by Gus Dur supporters from Banser, a paramilitary group of Nahdlatul Ulama, one of the largest Muslim groups in the country, who brought *golok* (Indonesian traditional machetes) with them. Suryadinata’s (2002) words resonated with this experience of mine when he explained that, “although Gus Dur was against violence, he did not stop his supporters from resorting to this move in order to defend him” (p. 187). After the parliament impeached Gus Dur and replaced him with Vice President Megawati in 2001, I began to realize that participating in a real-life political activism, joining protests, was

both extremely exhausting and not very effective in changing the political conditions. For this reason, I gradually disengaged from student political activism and allocated more time to my studies. From that point on I only followed political developments through mass media and rarely became involved in any real-life political matters.

After I finished my undergrad program, I worked briefly for the Indonesian News Agency, ANTARA before I realized that becoming a journalist in Indonesia was not a promising career. In addition to the low salary, I was convinced that most Indonesian media at that time were tightly affiliated with politicians. Therefore, I preferred to continue my studies as a graduate student at the Department of Communication Studies of the University of Indonesia, focusing my research on media studies. This would eventually lead me to my next career as a lecturer in the Department of Social and Political Sciences at Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University in Serang, Banten, only three hours from Jakarta. From my position as a faculty member, I could further study various aspects of Indonesian media, such as its relationship with the issues of culture, representation, terrorism, and religion. But I was still not at all interested in Indonesian politics, even after the Summer of 2012 when I was awarded a Fulbright fellowship for a doctoral program at the School of Media Arts and Studies at Ohio University.

As an Indonesian student studying at an American university, I believe my status plays an important role in determining why I chose this particular issue of transnational-homeland political engagement through media as my research project. The condition of being a transnational Indonesian has influenced me to consider myself as a displaced citizen, an Indonesian experiencing diasporic life in the United States. At first, I struggled

to adapt to my new home since most social and cultural environments were quite different compared to my country of origin. I gradually became more comfortable with the new environment because it was relatively easy for me, through the use of online media, to maintain connections with people and events in Indonesia while living in the US. Daily consumption of Indonesian news eventually became a regular practice to overcome my homesickness for being physically displaced from Indonesia.

Even though, as I mentioned, I was less interested in following Indonesian political matters, inevitably Indonesian politics became one of the most significant topics in my homeland media diet while I studied in the US. In the past, during the dictatorship of President Suharto, urban and educated Indonesians relied on the Internet to access political news about Indonesia since the local media had been prohibited posting political messages that challenged the regime (McDaniel, 2002; Winters, 2002). I recalled my own experience as a student activist when my seniors were frequently referred to the online mailing list of *Apa Kabar*, which was hosted in the US (MacDougall, n.d.). Indonesian students in diaspora also contributed to the circulation of international news about Indonesian politics to audiences in the homeland. Meanwhile, in the post-Suharto era, consuming political news is not uncommon for Indonesian audiences because such news is becoming more available to the public because of the current government's relative support for freedom of speech. Even for the Indonesian diaspora abroad, to catch up with current political events in Indonesia should no longer be difficult since most of the news is now available online. For this reason, I found that my current experience is quite different from that of my senior student activists. In Indonesia, they relied more on

foreign news to understand Indonesian politics, but now I, living in a foreign country, rely more on Indonesian news to experience Indonesian politics.

Apparently, being a transnational Indonesian in the United States also encouraged me to readjust my mode of engagement with Indonesian politics. Living faraway, outside the Indonesian national borders, has turned me into a politically marginalized citizen, mainly due to the absence of direct physical contact with Indonesian politics. Likewise, in terms of direct political engagement, many transnational people are considered marginalized since the homeland political sphere is so far away. Previously, Georgiou (2013) argued that diasporic audiences tend to use transnational media as a way to counter marginalization. Her argument parallels Anderson's (1998) assumption that members of the diaspora who are disengaged with the society of the country of settlement will have a higher tendency to involve themselves in long-distance politics of the homeland. Following these lines of argument, it is reasonable to think members of the diaspora rely more upon media, to obtain information about their homeland politics as well as a place to articulate their political interests. As a result, the practice of mediatization of transnational politics is firmly situated within these transnational people's mode of engagement with their homeland politics.

Nevertheless, the availability of political information provided by homeland media does not automatically correlate with the level of engagement of the Indonesian diaspora with Indonesian politics. Audience research literature shows there are both structural and individual factors that might become barriers for audience access to media content (Cooper & Tang, 2009; Webster, 2009). Some issues like audience motivation,

audience individual characteristics, and media availability have been found to contribute to the audience's decision in using media. These previous studies mainly used the general audience as their samples. Unfortunately, there is still little explanation of what factors determine diasporic audiences' decision to access their homeland media, especially when accessing political content.

Moreover, there is a need to understand the complexity of media use in transnational-homeland political engagement of the diaspora in relation to non-media factors. Indeed, Østegaard-Nielsen (2003a, 2003b) encouraged scholars to include both homeland and host land conditions in the exploration of whether people in diaspora are willing to participate in transnational politics. For example, she mentioned that members of diaspora who have had bad experiences with their homeland politics would have a better chance to disengage in such political participation. Additionally, she explained that the structural position obtained by the diaspora in the host society was also found to limit the participation of these nationals abroad with the political process situated in their country of origin. In this current study, I incorporate both media and non-media factors in the investigation of mediatization of long-distance politics of the Indonesian diaspora. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to provide a better explanation of the logic of this process of mediatization of transnational politics among the Indonesian diaspora in the US, including investigation of the factors that contribute to the degree of mediatization of politics experienced by these people.

## **Structure of the Dissertation**

Chapter I serves as an introduction to this dissertation project. As such, it discusses why the issue of media use and mediatization of transnational political participation of the Indonesian diaspora in the US was selected as the main focus of the research. In the discussion I include how my personal biography was an important factor in determining the selection of the study topic. I also briefly mention the gaps within the previous study of the Indonesian diaspora, and thus offer the current study as a contribution to the current scholarship of media and long-distance political participation of the diaspora.

Chapter II provides a brief historical background of the transnational mobility of Indonesians. I focus the discussion on three time-periods of the transnational migration: pre-modern, colonial, and contemporary migrations. Within these periods, I examine how long-distance political participation has been a common practice demonstrated by people in diaspora, although their modes of engagement as well as the degree of participation vary across different times and places. Lastly, I mention the presence of the Indonesian diaspora in the US, and how this particular community of overseas Indonesians may provide a distinctive case of transnational-homeland political participation through their media use.

Chapter III presents theoretical frameworks of this media ethnographic research based on the literature review. I begin the discussion with the examination of the relationships among diaspora scholarship, transnationalism and media. I also explain how media studies have contributed significantly to the study of transnational politics,

especially in the case of media and long-distance political engagement. Additionally, I highlight the use of mediatization as one of the main theoretical perspectives of this study, mainly to better understand the central role of media in mediatizing transnational-homeland political participation. Finally, I provide some rationale of why it is important to investigate the practice of mediatization of politics exhibited by nationals abroad, in particular members of the Indonesian diaspora in the US.

In Chapter IV, I lay out the methodological foundations of this dissertation. I discuss media ethnography and the appropriation of a multi-sited ethnographic approach in conducting transnational phenomena like the long-distance politics of diaspora. Next, I address the issue of native ethnography, and how the role of the researcher as an insider-outsider might be seen as beneficial in exploring the members of the Indonesian diaspora and their media-related transnational political activism. Subsequently, as part of the researcher's self-reflexivity, I also disclose my experience of the fieldwork—conducted in the Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles metropolitan areas between October 2014 and July 2015—by mentioning my personal biographies, both in how I conducted the field research and how I represented the subjects of the study throughout the dissertation writing.

Chapter V offers a description of the general context of the fieldwork scenes. In the first section, I describe the socio-demographic of the Indonesian diaspora in Washington, D. C., including their migration history and how overseas Indonesians within this metropolitan area have developed their diasporic community. In the second section, I provide an outline of the livelihood of members of the Indonesian diaspora in



the Los Angeles metropolitan area. In both sections, I examine how the Indonesian diaspora communities in both metropolitan areas demonstrate various forms of transnational activism, varied in terms of the mode of engagement but sharing commonality in their attempt to preserve their transnational connections with their homeland. Lastly, I briefly mention the increasing trans-local connection between members of the diaspora in both metropolises.

Chapter VI explores the nature of media use within the Indonesian diaspora in Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles and how this practice eventually connected to their mode of transnational-homeland political engagement. At first, I outline how people in diaspora appropriated the dual-nature of media consumption, which refers to the idea that members of the diaspora consume both host country and home county media content. Afterwards, a more detailed discussion is allocated to the practice of homeland political news consumption. This leads to an exploration of whether Indonesians in diaspora would further engage in transnational-homeland political activism. Special attention is given to the role of social media for members of the Indonesian diaspora in amplifying the circulation of homeland political news across national borders.

Chapter VII provides discussion of the two primary types of transnational political engagement of the Indonesian diaspora in their mediatized homeland politics, electoral and non-electoral political participation, and how these cases illustrate the practice of mediatization of politics. First, I exemplify how several activities directly related to the homeland national election, such as joining an Indonesian political party, arranging a homeland political campaign in diaspora, and voting for a political party or

political candidate during the election. Next discussed are more indirect transnational-homeland political engagement, including joining diaspora-homeland associations, lobbying and campaigning for homeland political issues, and attending public meeting with the Indonesian politicians and policy-makers in diaspora. These issues are viewed in the context of non-electoral long-distance involvement of the Indonesian diaspora in the political sphere of their country of origin. These two types of political activism are further examined in regards to their relationship with the increasing importance of media use to perform such transnational political participation, as has been suggested by mediatization theory.

Chapter VIII revisits some theoretical problems that I raise throughout the dissertation by emphasizing the role of mediatization of politics theory as my analytical tool. In the first section, the discussion will be devoted to investigation of the phases of mediatization of long-distance politics demonstrated by people in diaspora, including what factors determined the level of engagement of the Indonesian diaspora in the political sphere of their country of origin. Following that, I outline some problems raised concerning the nature of mediatization of politics exhibited by members of the diaspora, especially with the focus on diaspora's dependency upon media for homeland political participation as well as their status as a displaced-transnational audience, both of which are seen as complicating their mediatization of politics experience. In the final section, I offer a conclusion of the dissertation by summarizing my entire argument as well as the implications of this study, both for the scholarship of media, diaspora, and transnational

politics and for the ongoing efforts of the Indonesian diaspora to obtain wider access to participation in their homeland politics.

## **Chapter II: Transnational Mobility of Indonesians:**

### **Historical Overview of the Indonesian Transnational Migrations**

This chapter will discuss about the transnational mobility of Indonesians throughout different period of times. The discussion will be historical in nature, with the focus on three distinctive periods: pre-modern Indonesia, colonial period, and the more recent or contemporary Indonesia. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an historical overview of Indonesian transnational migration to different parts of the world, which was also spanning over centuries, as well as to examine how this practice eventually contributed to the development of long-distance nationalism and transnational participation of Indonesian diaspora with the political situation in the homeland.

The chapter will begin with the exploration of pre-modern Indonesians and how these people could develop a significant transnational mobility at that time. Some factors that encouraged these people to move to different places beyond their homeland are also included within the conversation. Within this section, I will briefly summarize previous historical studies of the movements of transnational Indonesians at the earlier period, mainly at the pre-modern Indonesian era. This section is also followed by the story of transnational movements of Indonesians during the colonial period. In many cases, Indonesians were forced to migrate to foreign countries for different reasons, such as to fill the labor shortage in the Dutch colonies (either as slaves, indentured workers or joining the colonial army) and sent to exile abroad due to their involvement in political activism in their homeland against the colonial government. The reason I include this particular period of time is that, this crucial point of time is argued as one important

period that determined the construction of Indonesian nationalism. In other words, the spirit of nationalism among Indonesians was principally constructed within this period of time. For instance, some scholars argued that the experience of being Indonesian ‘temporary’ diaspora, such as being with Indonesian students abroad, influenced how the Indonesian ‘founding fathers’ became more aware of the idea of the state sovereignty, and thus, encouraged them to fight for Indonesian independence, both against the colonialism of the Dutch as well as the Japanese (Brown, 2003; Ingleson, 1979). To put it simply, the transnationalism experienced by Indonesian diaspora at that time triggered the spirit of Indonesian nationalism.

The subsequent section is devoted to the discussion about a more recent migration of Indonesian in the contemporary setting. While it can be expected that the contexts as well as the reasons of transnational mobility of Indonesians within this time setting will be quite different to the earlier periods, I explore the similarities among those periods. The practice of long-distance politics exhibited by Indonesian diaspora in different countries, such as the RMS (*Republik Maluku Selatan*, the Republic of the South Moluccas) and GAM (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*, the Free Aceh Movement), is discussed to explore the connections between those members of diaspora’s homeland political engagement and the more recent transnational political participation of Indonesians in the US. By taking the practice of long-distance engagement in the homeland politics demonstrated by Indonesian diaspora in various countries as the background, this current study further examines whether transnational political participation in the home country’s politics is a global phenomenon among overseas Indonesians.

Furthermore, I argue that even though there were many differences in terms of the reasons of migration of Indonesian people over time, the advancement of modes of transportation and communication should be mentioned as the distinctive factors that influenced the movement of these transnational Indonesian in the more recent days. However, even though it can be assumed that in the earlier days transnational communication between Indonesians in the diaspora with their fellow nationals in the country of origin might be found in the use of early methods of communication, such as packet ship, mail, telegraph, and long-distance call, there is not much information on this particular topic provided by previous studies of the transnational mobility of Indonesians. As a result, for practical reason, I will exclude this topic from the discussion.

### **Pre-Modern Indonesians' Transnational Mobility**

The transnational mobility of people from the archipelago of what is today known as Indonesia, has been happening for centuries; predated to the pre-modern period. In fact, many of the early inhabitants of Indonesian archipelago were people who migrated transnationally from elsewhere. Some scholars argued that the ancestors of the majority of Indonesian population, as well as in many countries in Southeast Asia and Pacific Islands, are the Austronesians, who originally came from Taiwan and migrated to the region 5,500 years ago (Bellwood, Fox & Tryon, 1995; Gray, Drummond & Greenhill, 2009). One thing that needs to be noted, in various historical publications of the early migration of people from the archipelago of what we called as the present day Indonesia, scholars focused more on different Indonesian ethnic groups in their studies, such as Javanese, Acehnese, Macassans, Moluccans and Koepangers (Amersfoort, 2004;

Lockard, 1971; Martinez and Vickers, 2012), rather than focusing upon the use of Indonesians as a term of national identity. For instance, Martinez and Vickers (2012) mentioned how the term of Javanese was used to indicate people originated from the Dutch East Indies, the colonial name of Indonesia, while the ‘Malays’ term was applied to cover both the people of the Dutch East Indies and the British Malaya. They also found that both descriptors were being used in various occasions to discuss the mobility of Indonesians in their pre-modern periods. These people exhibited a wide range of migration from their homeland to other places, even regions, even before the modern national borders came into present.

In the case of fishermen and sailors—people who obtained one of the most advanced mobilities at that time, there were abundant evidences of how the early generations of Indonesian seafarers could perform extensive transnational mobility. Jones (1964) wrote about how Indonesian sea-travelers went as far as Africa, and had reached Madagascar around 400 CE, and even travelled further to West Africa as early as the 8<sup>th</sup> century. He further argued that the evidence of Indonesians migration to the African continent could be found in the presence of xylophones in Africa. In his research, the similarities of the musical instrument in the both places, Indonesia and Africa, as well as resemblances in other musical factors, were found to be influenced by the migration of the pre-modern Indonesian sea-travelers to this region.

Furthermore, according to Widjanarko (1997), Indonesian voyagers had reached Madagascar as early as 300 A. D. and many of these people had arrived from Borneo (Kalimantan). He further explained that the second wave of the migration of the Malay-

Indonesian traders came as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Taking the route from southern India, these early settlers later introduced their culture and technology to the local people. Brown (1979) even claimed that these people were the ancestors of the Merina, one of the most prominent ethnic groups in contemporary Madagascar. Widjanarko (1997) also explained that there are some similarities in terms of language and dialect used by these people with the ethnic groups in Borneo, which indicates the overlaps of culture between the two societies. In addition, a more extensive study conducted by Dick-Reid (2005), using multiple methods, such as document analysis, archeological study, as well as linguistic analysis, further supports the presence of Indonesian settlers in some parts of the African continent.

Martinez and Vickers (2012) also argued, to better understand the historical context of the mobility of Indonesian in the early periods, we need to mention how the cultural norms and the habit of moving along different places were both two common features in Indonesian culture. For example, the diversity of Indonesian culture itself is argued as the result of the mixture of different cultures brought by people from various regions, such as China, India, Middle East. The geographical condition of Indonesia as one of the widest archipelagos in the world has made the mobility across places and islands is not only ordinary but is also an essential part of the sociocultural life of Indonesians. For *Minang* people in West Sumatra, there is a tradition of *merantau* (moving from the hometown to other places), sometimes to other islands or even foreign countries, to make a better living. Early adults, mostly men, are highly encouraged to go *merantau*, and thus, could bring along and help the spread of their *Minang* culture to their



new homes. Martinez and Vickers (2012) also explained how *merantau* tradition ignited a wider chain of migration, where the earlier generation of migrants attracted their younger fellows to follow their elders' paths.

Another major reason for transnational mobility of Indonesians was socioeconomic (Martinez & Vickers, 2012). According to Brown (2003), Indonesia, along with other parts of Southeast Asian region, was said to be involved in the transnational trade even since 500 BC. Cultural artifacts describing trade exchanged including India and China were also mentioned by Reid (1988), as one prominent example of the early transnational economic practice in Indonesia. He further explained, a picture of a huge ship carved in the Borobudur temple in Central Java, which was build in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, indicated how Indonesians had already developed a sufficient mode of maritime transportation to support their global trade at that time. Consequently, the movement of these people to perform trade and other maritime businesses had been enabled by the shipbuilding technology during the period.

Similarly, the eastern part of Indonesian archipelago had also been a major international trade as well. The island of Maluku (Moluccas) for example, had been famous for its spices and had attracted foreign traders as far as China and India (Brown, 2003). Moreover, according to Martinez and Vickers (2012), not only Maluku but neighboring islands as well, such as Timor, had become a major interest for international traders at that time, which eventually invited the European colonizers like the Dutch and Portuguese to come to this region.

As part of the maritime culture, the mobility of Indonesians was mainly prominent among people who live near the sea. People who lived in small islands had the tendency of high mobility, which resulted in various long-distance migrations to many places or neighboring countries. In the case of Bajau people, they were even called the Sea Gypsies due to their ability to perform tremendous transnational mobility at that time, travelling to Australia from their homeland for centuries (Martinez & Vickers, 2012; Stacey, 2007). A similar mobility was also performed by many seafarers from other part of Eastern Indonesia, such as people from Rote Island (the southern-most island in Indonesia), Kupang, Alor, Lembata and Timor (Balint, 2005; Barnes, 2006; Fox, 1977; Gomang, 1993).

One thing that needs to be noted, the fact that this region had become an international trade center at that time, should be seen not only as the indicator of the emergence of foreign traders who came to Indonesia but also as the exemplar of the earliest transnational mobility of Indonesian sailors to foreign countries. Moreover, as argued by Macknight (1976), many Indonesian seafarers, who had been widely known as coming from the eastern parts of Indonesia, such as sailors from Bugis and Makassar, migrated to various places in the Southeast Asia and even Australia and Pacific Islands. Macknight further explained, when these sea people migrated to the new places and brought along their cultures, some of them even practiced intercultural marriage with the locals. This eventually would help the development of their diaspora communities in many parts of the Southeast Asia, such as the presence of Bugis diaspora in Malaysia (Andaya & Andaya, 2001).

## **Colonial-Influenced Indonesians' Migrations**

When the European colonials came to the Indonesian archipelago in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, one could say that the migration of Indonesians became more extensive than before. However, this mobility of Indonesian at the same time also became restricted since most of migrations were the result of the colonial force, mainly via slavery and forced labor. Within this section, I will discuss how the presence of European colonial power in the Indonesian archipelago had a significant influence on the transnational migration of Indonesians during this period. The discussion will include the cases of Indonesian migration to different parts of the world, such as South Africa, Sri Lanka, Middle East, Surinam, New Caledonia, Australia, Malaya, and also the Netherlands. While each migration route has its own story, most of the displacements experienced by these Indonesians during this period can be argued to be the direct result of the Dutch colonialism.

One of the first prominent colonial-influenced migrations of Indonesians was the forced relocation of the East Indies people by the Dutch from the archipelago to the Cape of Good Hope (or also called as Cape Malay) in South Africa, early in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. According to Shell (1997), around 63,000 slaves were taken to this location with at least 22.7% of these people brought from Indonesia between the period of 1652 to 1808. While the majority of these Indonesians were taken from larger islands, mainly from Java, Sumatera, and Sulawesi, people from other parts of the archipelago, such as Timor and Ambon were also taken along with them (Bradlow & Cairns, 1978; Jappie, 2012).

According to Jappie (2012), in addition to the slaves, there were also a smaller numbers of Indonesian political exiles and convicts, who were expelled from their homeland due to their previous involvement in political activism and warfare against the Dutch, and who began to contribute to the construction of the Muslim community of this ‘Cape Malay.’ He also mentioned that one of the most prominent anti-Dutch Muslim leaders was Sheikh Yusuf Taj al-Khalwaty or Sheikh Yusuf Al-Maqassari, who was brought by the Dutch in 1694 along with his family and followers. While Sheikh Yusuf became a notable Muslim figure in Cape Malay, and even considered as, “the founder of Islam in South Africa” (Jappie, 2012, p. 146), his name is less familiar in his homeland, Indonesia.

There was also a presence of Indonesians migration to Dutch Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka) around the 17<sup>th</sup> century. During the colonial period in Sri Lanka, in addition to slaves, political exiles and convicts, there were also people from Indonesian archipelago who came to this country by joining the Dutch military. The initial number of Indonesians brought by the Dutch to join its military was unclear but Widjanarko (1997) estimated that there were around 2,200 soldiers under the Dutch in Sri Lanka at that time. He further explained since most of these people were men, they had to marry local women while they were staying in Sri Lanka. After the Dutch was defeated by the British in 1796, they also took over Sri Lanka. Apparently, these Indonesians enrolled in the Dutch army were categorized by the British as ‘Malays,’ while the local people called them either *Ja Minissu* (Javanese) or *Java Manusar* (Thomas, 2012).

In terms of ethnic composition, while many of the Indonesians who were taken to Sri Lanka were Muslims, which highlighted the Muslims identity of the Malays in Sri Lanka, the Dutch military was also joined by a smaller Indonesian ethnic group like the Ambonese. According to Thomas (2012), the Dutch favored recruiting people from Ambon for the army due to several factors, such as their loyalty, strength at war, and ability to speak multiple languages. One of the most interesting stories about the Indonesian diaspora in Sri Lanka was the story of Oodeen. An Indonesian-born Dutch regiment soldier in Ceylon, he later joined the British as interpreter and eventually was assigned a position in another British colony, New South Wales, Australia in 1816 (Saldin, 2002; Thomas, 2012). Oodeen had to experience a double-migration due to the transition of power in Sri Lanka from the Dutch to the British. Apparently, this was not only the case of Oodeen since multiple displacements of Indonesian diaspora were also evident at this time, with some of these people were taken by the Dutch from Sri Lanka to South Africa while some of them were taken to the British's colonies, such as Australia and Malaya.

Another main destination of Indonesian migration was the Middle East. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, thousands of Indonesians visited the Holy Mecca to perform hajj (Islamic pilgrimage), which resulted in the wariness of the Dutch government in the presence of Pan-Islamism spirit brought by these pilgrims to their homeland. However, the main concern of the Dutch was the transnational political activisms of Indonesians who stayed in Mecca, mainly those who became students and Islamic scholars and further maintained their constant communication with people in their homeland, in addition to spreading the

fatwa (Islamic scholars opinions) through books written in Jawi script, which is the adapted Arabic script for the Malay language (Widjanarko, 2007). The Dutch government even needed to appoint a government official to perform a tighter surveillance of these members of diaspora as well as the Indonesian pilgrims in order to prevent the spread of Islamic political activism against the colonial government (Alexanderson, 2014). Nevertheless, due to the increasing number of Indonesians who performed the hajj in the following years, the Dutch felt compelled to open a consulate in Jeddah (Laffan, 2003). This made the surveillance intended by the Dutch for these members of diaspora's political activism more impractical.

The notable contribution of the Indonesian diaspora to the politics of their homeland was also evident in Cairo. While Mecca was seen as the religious center of Indonesians who performed pilgrimage, Cairo, as the host of the oldest Islamic university, Al-Azhar University, became one of the primary destinations for those who wanted to study Islam. According to Laffan (2004), the community of Southeast Asian students in the Al-Azhar neighborhood had been established back in 1860. He further explained, Indonesian Muslim scholars in Cairo were interested in the printing press, which was popular in Egypt at that time, and began to use this technology to print, and later published, their works in Arabic, Malay, or Jawi scripts. Laffan called this kind of practice as print-activism. Eventually, these members of diaspora also introduced the same method of publication in their hometowns in Indonesia, which was to some extent helped the spread of print-activism in the homeland. In the long run, Laffan also mentioned that Indonesian students who came to Al-Azhar, varied from Sumatra to Java,

were contributing to the presence of Islamic cum political activism, such as the Muhammadiyah, one of the most prominent Islamic movements that promoted the idea of independence against the Dutch colonialism in East Indies. At some point, the increasing significance of transnational political activism of Indonesian Muslim scholars to promote the Indonesian nationalism during this time, such as happened in Cairo and Mecca, should be regarded as one of the important moments for the construction of Indonesia as a nation.

The late 19<sup>th</sup> century also highlighted another form of migration of Indonesians. Since the Dutch abolished slavery in 1860, Indonesians who were brought from their homeland saw their status changed from slaves to indentured laborers. According to Martinez and Vickers (2012), even though the duration of the work contract of these indentured laborers was usually explicitly stated before they were sent abroad, varied from two to five years, this practice should not be seen as a temporary migration since most of these workers refused or did not want to return to their homelands, mainly due to financial issue, poverty, and the lack of job opportunity in their hometown. Those who decided to stay in the appointed places to work abroad tended to continue to form a new community based on their place of origins, with some of them even marrying the locals.

Across the Atlantic Ocean, various scholars also had conducted several studies on the sociocultural aspects of the Javanese diaspora in Surinam (the present-day the Republic of Suriname), a Dutch colony in Southern America. Yusuf Ismael pioneered the study in 1955 with the focus on history of the migration of the Javanese to Surinam through his book *Indonesia Pada Pantai Lautan Atlantik* (Indonesia on the Atlantic

Ocean's Shore) while Annemarie de Waal Malefijt (1963) and Parsudi Suparlan (1995) conducted anthropological research on the very same diasporic group. In a more recent study, Pamela Allen (2011) found connections between Javanese cultural traditions with contemporary Surinamese who have Javanese ancestors. The early presence of these Javanese diaspora faraway from their hometowns on the island of Java can be traced back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Dutch allowed the relocation of the Javanese indentured workers from East Indies to Surinam, mainly to fill in the workers shortage in that area.

The first wave of Javanese indentured labors sponsored by a private Dutch company arrived in Paramaribo, the capitol city of Surinam, in 1891 with a total of 94 workers, including 31 women and two children (Ismael, 1955; Lockard, 1971; van der Kroef, 1951). In the early 1900s, additional workforce of 5,433 people from Batavia and Semarang were also arrived in Surinam. Up until 1939, there were around 32,962 indentured workers, mainly from Java Island brought to this Dutch colony to work at sugar plantations (Allen, 2011; Emmer & Shlomowitz, 1995, Martinez & Vickers, 2012).

Koesoebjono (2000) also discussed several categorizes of Javanese-Surinamese. First were those who stayed in Surinam and married with local people, who eventually contributed to the development of Javanese diasporic community in Surinam. Second were the Javanese workers who returned home to their homeland once the contract had ended. Nevertheless, before the Second World War, only few of these workers returned to their place of origin by the end of their contract while the majority decided to stay despite the difficulty of life in their workplace (Hoefte, 1998). There were various reasons why these people decided to remain in Surinam, even though they had to live in



poor conditions. According to Lockard (1971), many of these workers had a high expectation before they came to the plantations, such as having a high salary, but their expectation was never met since they were only paid poverty wages. Unable to fulfill their expectations and afraid of facing humiliation if they returned to their hometown empty-handed, or even facing another period of poverty due to the lack of job opportunity in the East Indies, had forced them to accept the bitter reality of staying in Surinam.

In the pre Second World War, Anton De Kom, a Dutch political activist was said by Hoefte (1998) to be the first politician who promoted the idea of repatriation of Javanese diaspora to their homeland in the 1930s. Unfortunately, as explained by Hoefte, De Kom, who claimed to have a close relationship with the Dutch queen and even Mahatma Gandhi, was later detained by the Dutch government and sent back to the Netherlands in 1933, which postponed the repatriation of these Javanese in Surinam. In the post Second World War era, the political landscape in Surinam also changed. Javanese who stayed in this country were allowed to set up their own political parties. According to Hoefte (1998), two ethnic-Java associated political parties were formed and even joined the national election in 1949. One Javanese political party, KTPI (*Kaum Tani Persatuan Indonesia*, the Indonesian Farmers' Union), had as one of its missions to send back home the Javanese diaspora (*mulih nDjowo*) to their homeland. The members of Javanese diaspora were asked to collect money to pay for the repatriation but the ship that was meant to bring them home never came (Allen, 2013; Suparlan, 1995).

According to Allen (2013), when Surinam gained an autonomous region status from the Dutch, and held its very first general election in 1950, most of the people in Surinam automatically became Dutch citizens. However, many Javanese diaspora refused this idea and wanted to become Indonesian citizens since they had also heard the news that their homeland had already gained its independence earlier in 1945. The Indonesian government, also upon hearing the news about the willingness of Javanese in Suriname to return home, later sent a senior politician from PSII (*Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia*, the Islamic Association Party Indonesia), Abikusno Tjokrosujoso to Surinam to conduct a preliminary survey about the possibility of the repatriation. Later, *Jajasan ke Tanah Air* (the Foundation to the Homeland), a homeland foundation that aimed for the repatriation mission was established in 1951 (Allen, 2013).

In the following years, a delegation of Javanese diaspora was invited to meet with President Sukarno in Indonesia, mainly to discuss the repatriation project (Allen, 2013). Additionally, according to Koesoebjono (2000), one of the Javanese diaspora political party leaders, Salikin Hardjo, who failed in the general election in Surinam also began to encourage the Javanese diaspora to return to Indonesia, which resulted in the homecoming of a thousand people to their homeland. Koesoebjono further explained that around 1,200 Javanese contract laborers embarked from Surinam by the *Langkoeas* ship to Indonesia in 1953. However, Allen (2013) mentioned a slightly different number when she said around 1014 Javanese, with 646 of them were born in diaspora, embarked Surinam in January 4, 1954. Initially, these returned diaspora were asked to be relocated either to Java or Lampung but the Indonesian government declined the request and

provided them a new home in Pasaman, West Sumatra, since it was considered as parallel with the government's national project of transmigration (Allen, 2013; Koesoebjono, 2000).

Koesoebjono (2000) also explained that another period of a massive migration of Javanese diaspora departing Surinam also occurred in the 1970s long after the home country gained independence; but this time, around 25,000 Javanese departed to the Netherlands rather than to Indonesia. He mentioned that these multiple-displaced Javanese diaspora settled in several areas in the Netherlands, mainly in Den Haag, Amsterdam, Rotterdam as well as Groningen, and most of them integrated into the host society while still preserving their Javanese identity. Since many of these people still had their relatives back in Suriname, as explained by Koesoebjono, they maintained contact with their family back there as well as visiting them on several occasions. As for today, it is estimated that there are around 70,000 Javanese diaspora in Suriname, the fourth largest ethnic groups in this country, with only a small number of them having a chance to visit their ancestors' homeland or maintain connections with the family back home (Hoefte, 2008). However, the Javanese cultural practices, such as language and musical traditions like *gamelan* and *keroncong* have been preserved with some local adjustments, and still embraced by the second or third generation of the Javanese diaspora (Allen, 2011).

Here, I would like to emphasize that the repatriation project of Javanese in Surinam to Indonesia not only exemplified the political activism of the Javanese in diaspora, but to some extent, it also highlights the nature of transnational political involvement of the

members of diaspora in the homeland government policies, such as through their transnational political lobbies aimed for repatriation. Lockard (1978) explained that since many Javanese in Suriname closely monitored the political development in their homeland, mainly in the 1940s when Indonesia struggled for its independence, this practice had contributed to the development of Indonesian long-distance nationalism among the Javanese diaspora. Therefore, Javanese political parties in Surinam were the first to actively lobby the Indonesian government to support the repatriation. When the homeland government was reluctant to support *mulih nDjowo* project and even discouraged the repatriation by saying the economic condition in the homeland was worse than in Surinam, Javanese political leaders in diaspora like Iding Soemita went to Jakarta, as well as the Netherlands, to directly lobby the homeland government leaders. Political lobbies made by political leaders of PBIS (*Pergerakan Bangsa Indonesia Suriname*, the People's Party of Indonesians in Surinam) to the homeland government was also argued by Lockard (1978) as one major factor that contributed to the success of repatriation in 1954. Within this sense, transnational political participation of Indonesian diaspora in Surinam might be categorized more as diaspora politics while not so much related to the homeland political sphere. Nevertheless, both categories should be understood as important in understanding the nature of long-distance political engagement of Indonesians in diaspora, not only in Surinam but also in another countries as well.

When the Dutch allowed the exportation of indentured labors from East Indies, the French government also took advantage of this policy by utilizing the Javanese

workers to work at its colony of New Caledonia in 1896. As a result, a large population of overseas Javanese of 20,000 people could be found in New Caledonia, who migrated between 1896 and 1955, initially as five-year contract workers but who later permanently stayed in this country (Maurer, 2010). Javanese was contracted to work in the agriculture sector but later was moved to do the hard work of mining and plantation. The needs of labor in a booming mining industry had attracted the second wave of Javanese indentured labors' migration between 1933 and 1939 with around 7,800 people arrived in Nouméa, New Caledonia (Allen, 2010). Alas, as an impact of the Great Depression in 1929 until 1933, around 3,000 Javanese workers had to return to their homeland in the interval of 1929 to 1934. In addition, after Indonesia gained its independence, between 1949 and 1955 the government had brought back home only around 7,500 of these Javanese labors (Maurer, 2010). As for the present day, Allen (2010) estimated that no less than 7,000 Indonesians diaspora are currently living in this country. Unfortunately, unlike the case of Javanese laborers in Surinam, there was not enough information to explain whether the repatriation of Indonesians in New Caledonia was supported by the long-distance political lobbies made by the members of diaspora.

A more proximate migration of the Indonesians also happened in neighboring countries, mainly in Malaysia. The migration of the people from Indonesia to the Malay Peninsula, and vice versa, can be traced back to the last five centuries (Hugo, 2007). The *Minang* people from West Sumatera had explored and settled in several areas in the Malay Peninsula, such as Negeri Sembilan, Johor, and Selangor no later than the 12<sup>th</sup> century, long before the Westerners arrived in Southeast Asia (Bungo, Hussin, Omar &

Bidin, 2012). Similarly, the Bugis people had already settled along the coast of the Strait of Malacca as early as 17<sup>th</sup> century, and eventually became a prominent ethnic in the local politics, especially in Johor and Selangor (Omar, Bungo, Hussin & Bidin, 2012). In the case of Javanese people, they are widely considered as part of the ‘Malays’ in general, who had exhibited transnational mobility even before the modern boundaries of nation-state became extant (“Javanese, Orang Jawa,” n.d.). As a result, Javanese were considered part of the Malays in the archipelago, and even those who live in Malaya and Borneo might have Javanese-roots, although many of them more considered themselves as Malay rather than Javanese. The free migration of the Javanese into Malaya became more frequent when the European came to the region, especially during the establishment of the Strait Settlements. These early immigrants reported to work as sailors, servants, and small merchants. The Javanese enclave had been found as early as 1836 in Singapore while the population of the Javanese had also grown from 38 people in 1825 to 5,885 people in 1881. Similarly, there were at least 4,683 Indonesians, with the Javanese population as the majority, who lived in Penang and Malacca around 1871 (Lockard, 1971).

As explained by Lockard (1971), starting in 1881, Malaya was also one of the first British territories to employ Javanese indentured laborers, mainly to work at rubber plantations. As for the British, Javanese workers were preferred over the Chinese and Indian workers due to their ability to assimilate with the Malay environment due to the proximity with their home environment in Java. The population of the Javanese in the Malay Peninsula began to rise, with 14,239 people in 1891 to 169,311 in 1931. Even

though the British had discontinued the contract system in 1932, in the following years, around 15,000 free Javanese workers still came to work in the plantations. Since the early Javanese workers in the Malay Peninsula tended to stay permanently in their new home, they also maintained communication with their relatives in their hometown and invited their fellow home villagers to join them in Malaya. Due to the cultural proximity, especially with religion, Javanese could assimilate with relative ease into the Malay society (Lockard, 1971).

Despite geographical proximity, there was little presence of Indonesian indentured workers in Australia. When the sugar plantations in Queensland had imported several hundreds of indentured laborers from Banten and Sunda in 1885, it was not seen as a significant example of the migration of Indonesians to Australia (Martinez and Vickers, 2012). Similarly, Houben (1994) only briefly mentioned the presence of Indonesian laborers both in Australia and Papua New Guinea within the same period of time, and he did not further detail his examination of the livelihood of Indonesian workers at these places. According to Martinez and Vickers (2012), as an impact of the Immigration Restriction Act in 1901, the number of Javanese workers was gradually reduced with only 13 workers contracted by the end of 1916. However, as argued by Martinez (2012), if we take a look at other sectors, mainly the pearl-shell industry, there were significantly more Indonesian workers signed as laborers between 1870s and 1950s. He further explained that the pearl-shell industry had gained an exemption from the Australian government to recruit foreign contract workers, in this case from Kupang, which resulted in the presence of thousands of male indentured workers to Australia.

Despite the close surveillance by the Australian government, many of these workers were able to permanently stay as well as to perform intermarriage with the locals, and some of them eventually gained Australian citizenship in the post Second World War (Martinez, 2005; Martinez, 2011).

While the displacements of Indonesians from their homeland to other places in various regions, as I have discussed earlier, can be understood as the result of the colonial policy of the Dutch government, especially related to its attitude toward the slaves or indentured workers, a slightly different case happened with the migration of Indonesian to the land of the colonizer, the Netherlands. Due to this colonial connection, many Indonesians migrated to the Netherlands beginning in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, selective migrations of Indonesians to the Netherlands were practiced mostly by the aristocrats (Martinez & Vickers, 2012). One of the most prominent figures of Javanese who migrated to the Netherlands was the painter Raden Saleh, who went to the Europe in 1829 and was even mentioned by Krauss (2004) as, “the first Indonesian modern man” (p. 264). In addition, among those who came to the Netherlands were political exiles, who were also eventually helped the construction of Indonesian nationalist movement (Poeze, quoted in Martinez & Vickers, 2012).

In the early 1900s, the presence of Indonesian students in the Netherlands was becoming common. In terms of their sociocultural background, as mentioned by Martinez and Vickers (2012), most of these students came from aristocratic families, being sent abroad by their wealthy or socially powerful parents in Indonesia for a better education. Because they tended to be obedient to the Dutch’s rules, they became less critical



regarding the colonial policy of their homeland. For instance, the first Indonesian student organizations in the Netherlands called *Indische Vereeniging* (*Perhimpoean Indonesia*, the Indonesian Association), which was established in 1908 and Indonesian-Chinese organization of *Chung Hwa Hui* founded in 1918 were apolitical at first. In the following years, *Indische Vereeniging* published *Hindia Poetra* journal, mainly to discuss the relationship between the Dutch government with the East Indies (Stutje, 2013).

*Perhimpoean Indonesia* became more critical toward the Dutch imperialism mainly due to the influence of several Indonesian political activists who stayed in the Netherlands at that time, such as Sam Ratulangi, Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo, and Soewardi Soerjaningrat. The last two names were also political exiles, who were deported to the Netherlands because of their involvement with the anti-colonialism movement in East Indies through their political party *Indische Partij* (Indies Party), the first ever political party in Indonesia, which was also the first to promote Indonesian nationalism in 1912. In the following years, Indonesian students who arrived in the Netherlands came more often from the urban middle class rather than aristocrats, resulted in a more hostile attitude toward the Dutch colonial policy. In 1924, *Perhimpoean Indonesia* changed the name of its publication from a less critical journal of *Hindia Poetra* (the Son of Indies) into *Indonesia Merdeka* (Free Indonesia), which was considered more unequivocal in expressing the idea of Indonesian freedom, unity, as well as political and economic independence (Stutje, 2013).

A publication dating back to 1928 featured a report of the arrest of four student activists who were also leading members of *Perhimpoean Indonesia* by the Dutch

government due to their long-distance political activism promoting Indonesian revolution. The article mentioned that in June 1927, the police raided the students' dorm and found what they considered to be provocative materials, such as books, posters, and pamphlets related to the nationalism campaign of Indonesia. Later on, the Dutch officials charged these students with the crime of publishing communist related material, even though it was not proven a few months later, and sentenced them to jail for six months. Apparently, the main target of the Dutch government was the *Indonesia Merdeka*, which was seen as the main instrument of the students to campaign for Indonesian revolution. Among those four students who were arrested was Mohammad Hatta, who later became the first vice-president of the Republic of Indonesia when the country proclaimed its independence in 1945. Hatta also became politically active beyond the Netherlands by attending the League Against Imperialism congress in Brussels where he met with nationalists from other countries, including the Indian leader Jawaharlal Nehru (Kahin, 1980; Lehning, 1928; Rose, 2010). Not only Hatta, various Indonesian students in the Netherlands also expanded their transnational network with national leaders from several colonized countries, such as from political figures from French Algeria and the Chinese Guomindang party (Stutje, 2013).

The exposure of higher education as well as the experience of living in the European society can be argued as giving a positive influence to the Indonesian students in the Netherlands. Their positions as middle-class citizens of the East Indies enabled them to go abroad and to pursue a better education in the Netherlands, which in return, they also tried to seek out any means to give something in return for the homeland. As

foreign students in Europe, they found themselves to be exposed to the contemporary ideas at that time concerning criticism toward the global Western imperialism. Therefore, political discussion related to the position of the Dutch and East Indies became inevitable within the study group of Indonesian students. Consequently, they became more attracted to the involvement of political activism on promoting the idea of Indonesian freedom. Within this sense, the political activism of these students as Indonesian ‘temporary’ diaspora can be understood as beginning the practice of transnational political participation, especially in the construction of the Indonesian nationalism.

However, there was no singular unity among the Indonesian students in the Netherlands at that time. Although *Persatoean Indonesia* remained as one of the leading Indonesian student organizations, there were some disagreements with other similar organizations. For instance, Indonesian-Chinese student association, *Chung Hwa Hui* remained neutral in the issue of the relationship between the Dutch and the East Indies, and they preferred to publish international news mainly related to the political conditions of China, which they saw as their fatherland. Another example was the disagreement of one of the members of *Persatoean Indonesia*, Noto Soeroto who refused the promotion of nationalists’ ideas and later published an alternative journal called *Oedaja*, which tried to avoid politics in its publications (Stutje, 2013).

One important figure needs to be mentioned amongst the Indonesian nationalist students cum political activists in the Netherland, Tan Malaka. Jarvis (1987) explained that, Tan Malaka was a smart boy who came from West Sumatra from low-level administrator parents but a local Dutch teacher persuaded the whole village to collect

money to send Tan Malaka to be trained as a teacher in the Netherlands. While he studied in Europe, Tan Malaka became attracted to the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, and he later met with other Indonesian nationalist students as well as Dutch socialist and communist activists, most notably Henk Sneevliet, who later helped the establishment of the Indonesian first socialist party, the Indies Social Democratic Association (ISDV), which eventually transformed into the first Indonesian Communist Party, *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (PKI) in 1920. PKI was also considered the largest communist party in the world at that time, outside the communist countries (Nusa, 1987). Upon his return to Indonesia in 1919, Tan Malaka worked as a teacher in Sumatera and Java, writing for the press, and later becoming a labor union leader as well as political activist. After Semaun, the first PKI's president, was exiled to the Netherlands in 1912, Tan Malaka took over his place. Because of their concern with his political activities with PKI, the Dutch government also exiled him to the Netherlands on March 24, 1922 (Jarvis, 1987; Mrázek, 1972).

Following his return to the Netherlands, Tan Malaka remained active in politics. He joined the Dutch Communist Party in the same year and even was nominated for a parliamentary member as the party's representative. It was the first time that a person from Indonesia was nominated for such a position. Unfortunately, he did not receive enough votes, and he was also considered too young to be elected as a parliamentary member. He moved to Berlin just before the voting finished to meet another Indonesian communist activist who was associated with the Communist International's bureau in Western Europe before Tan Malaka continued his journey to Moscow to attend the

Executive Meeting of Communist International (Comintern). Along with Semaun, Tan Malaka was appointed as a Comintern's representative of Indonesia as well as contributing to the writing of Profintern's journal. While being displaced from his homeland, he maintained communication with his fellow activists in Indonesia and still exhibited various political activisms mainly through publications until his return just a few years before the Indonesian independence in 1945 (Jarvis, 1987; Malaka, 1991).

Overall, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, many educated Indonesians abroad became the main promoters of the Indonesian independence movement through their long-distance political activities. As I have mentioned before, their privileged position allowed them to engage in such transnational political participation, while some of them remained politically passive. As for those people who performed active roles in contributing to their homeland through long-distance political activism, when they returned home to Indonesia, it was very likely that they were involved in the military struggle for independence from the Dutch as well as the Japan imperial power that came during the Second World War. Within this sense, it can be argued that their experience of being transnational political actors abroad also contributed to the homeland political activisms of these returned Indonesian diaspora.

### **Human Mobility and Long-Distance Politics in the Post-Independence Indonesia**

After Indonesia gained its independence in August 17, 1945, many political tensions arose. Sukarno, Indonesian first president was facing various serious problems, such as instability of national economic and security, while at the same time the Dutch, supported by the Allied troops, also attempted to recolonize Indonesia. In addition, some

local leaders started the rebellion against the Indonesian central government, which resulted in the emergence of separatist movement, most notably in Aceh and South Moluccas in the 1950s. Defeated by the Indonesian military force, many of the rebellion leaders escaped to another countries, formed their own government-in exile and started their transnational political activism, which aimed to influence the homeland political sphere. Moreover, the national political turbulence in the mid 1960s, especially when General Suharto replaced Sukarno as the president, also influenced the livelihood of Indonesian overseas, where many of the Sukarno supporters and socialist activists were banned to return home. Eventually, these Indonesians would engage in long-distance politics of the homeland in order to challenge the political regime in Indonesia. This section will be devoted to the discussion of transnational political participation of these displaced Indonesians during this period and how political activisms demonstrated by these Indonesians in diaspora should be referred to as the model of more radical long-distance political engagement in the home country's politics.

**The Moluccan diaspora in the Netherlands.** During the Dutch colonial period, the imperial government in Indonesia formed a special army to maintain its military control of its colony. This military force was called KNIL (*Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger*, the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army), which was led by the Dutch soldiers but whose ranks included many of the low-level soldiers who came from the local Indonesians. Among these native soldiers, the ethnic Ambonese in Southern Moluccas, were the most dominant compared to the other ethnicities. These Ambonese were loyal to the Dutch and considered by the army as reliable during the war, and thus, they became

preferred by the colonial government (van Amersfoort, 2004). When the Indonesian nationalists declared the national independence after Japan—who took over Indonesia from the Dutch from 1942 to 1945—was surrendered by the end of the Second World War, the Dutch still wanted to reclaim its former colony by using the KNIL soldiers as one of their supporters. However, the international diplomacy made by the Indonesian leaders was successful in demanding the transfer of sovereignty from the Dutch to Indonesia in 1949; thus, KNIL was automatically dismissed and this led to the uncertainty among the Ambonese KNIL soldiers (van Amersfoort, 2004).

When the self-proclaimed *Republik Maluku Selatan* (the Republic of South Moluccas, RMS) was founded in 1950, many of the KNIL Moluccan soldiers who had been displaced from their homeland wanted to return to Moluccas. The Indonesian government refused this idea since the KNIL soldiers were still considered to be working for the Dutch and the new government forbade the repatriation of these people to their homeland. As a result, the Dutch decided to bring the Moluccas and their families to the Netherlands instead. Around 12,500 Moluccas were brought to the colonizer's land in 1951. Because initially the government considered them to be staying temporary in the Netherlands, the Dutch government placed these people in secluded camps in various places across the country and forced them to live in poor conditions, isolated from the host society. Being refused to join the Dutch army and not being offered any other employment, these Moluccans felt betrayed by the Dutch (Verkuyten, van de Calseijde & de Leur, 1999).

After being double-crossed by the Dutch, the Moluccans in diaspora then tried to reestablish the idea of the RMS and began to perform transnational politics to support the RMS. The RMS supporters in the Netherlands acted as ‘support nationalist’ movement when they followed the direction of the RMS guerilla leaders in the homeland to pursue ‘free Moluccas.’ In addition to gain international supports, the RMS in-exile members also sought global recognition for the RMS status as an independent nation. The Indonesian military force, however, had been able to dissolve the RMS in Moluccas and captured its leader, Chris Soumokil in 1963. This would lead to the establishment of the RMS’ government in-exile in the Netherlands. Manusama, the cofounder of the RMS, was later appointed as the RMS’ president in-exile, and he led the transnational political activism of the Moluccan diaspora (Steiljen, 2010).

A more radical leader, I Tamaela, a former RMS guerilla established an alternative government in-exile that challenged Manusama’s leadership. Tamaela was very active politically, and he even went to the United Nations in order to gain supports for the RMS. Long-distance political activism of the younger generation of the RMS members became extreme in the 1970s, starting with their attempt to burn down the Indonesian Embassy, and this was later followed by the violent attack to the house of the Indonesian Ambassador for the Dutch in Wassenaar. Moreover, when the Dutch government declined the RMS members’ demand to support their political movements, the members began attacking the Dutch civilians in 1977. When the realization of the free RMS became less realistic, in addition to the Dutch government’s effort to embrace and to improve the Moluccan diaspora living condition, the acts of terrorism gradually



disappeared (Steiljen, 2010; Verkuyten et al., 1999). Even though the support of the RMS might still be visible among the Moluccas diaspora in the Netherlands, the transnational political activism of these people to proclaim a free Moluccas has become irrelevant. In one of the media interviews, the current President of RMS in-exile government, John Wattilette said that RMS would no longer fight for independence from Indonesia and would encourage the freedom of speech in their homeland instead, in addition to seek for an autonomy position just like the one that was given by Indonesian government to Aceh province (“Moluccan Exiles, “ 2009).

**The story of Sukarno’s students.** In the post-independence Indonesia, President Sukarno supported the idea of the Non-Align Movement in the developing countries, and this would influence Indonesian’s foreign policy during these years. The idea was to maintain Indonesia’s independence from supporting either Western or Eastern Blocs during the Cold War era. One of the results of this policy was to allow Indonesia to involve itself in various educational and cultural exchanges with both Western countries and Communist countries. Thus, thousands Indonesian students were invited to study abroad and later nicknamed as ‘Sukarno’s students’ (Dragojlovic, 2010). However, the fate of these students became uncertain when the major political situation occurred in the homeland in the 1965. General Suharto seized the state’s power from President Sukarno after the attempted coup of the PKI was able to overcome by the army under the general’s command. This was followed by the persecution of PKI supporters throughout the country by the army, and this resulted in the mass killing of more than a hundred thousands people (Zurbuchen, 2002). Little international attention was given to this

genocide at that time, and only after the 1990s, did more scholars become attracted to study the event (Cribb, 2001).

According to Hill (2010), there were at least 500 Indonesian delegates attending the state's invitation to join the China's National Day parade in Beijing in October 1, 1965. Among the attendants were Indonesian students, embassy's staffs and diplomats, and cultural workers, with most of them being members of (or affiliated with) the PKI. They were unaware of the political changes at home and only obtained the news from the newspaper clippings and the broadcast of *Radio Republik Indonesia* (RRI) a few days later informing them of their fate as political exiles.

Hill (2010) also explained that a similar situation occurred in the Soviet Union, one of the main destinations for Indonesian students to study at that time. Previously, after Sukarno's visit to Moscow in 1956, seven Indonesian students were invited to study in the Soviet Union. In the following years, at least 2,000 students came to the country to study various fields, ranging from film to medicine. Historically, the Soviet Union was one of the primary destinations of Indonesian political refugees since the 1920s, when many anti-Dutch political activists went to escape the colonial repression. Indonesian communist leaders during the Dutch occupation, such as Musso and Semaun escaped to Soviet Union and later taught the Indonesian language at a university in Moscow (Hill, 2010). Similar to their compatriots in China, many of these Indonesian students in the Soviet Union could not return home due to the political instability in Indonesia.

When Suharto took over Sukarno's seat in 1965, many Sukarno's supporters overseas, from diplomats to students, either refused or rejected the call to return home.

Indonesian embassies under Suharto's government placed a 'screening' test to these overseas Indonesians. Those who failed to swear their loyalty to the new government were forced to give up their passport and lost their Indonesian citizenship. From the perspective of the Sukarno's supporters, especially those PKI members, there was also a high chance of persecution, or even death, waiting for them if they decided to return to their homeland (Hill, 2010).

Eventually, after the PKI was disbanded in Indonesia, the remaining members overseas established a party-in-exile in Beijing in February 1966. This group was led by one of its most senior members, Jusuf Adjitorop. He ordered the members who were scattered all over different countries to regroup in Beijing. The party monitored the political conditions in Indonesia and waited for the right time to influence the political situation at home. Unfortunately, the chance of returning home became nearly impossible at that time. In addition to the internal friction, the difficulties of living in China, which employed the Cultural Revolution at that time and further socially and economically isolated the Indonesians from the locals, forced the party members to relocate themselves to another countries, such as the Netherlands, Sweden, France, and even Cuba (Hearman, 2010; Hill, 2010).

Being political exiles encouraged these Indonesian abroad to exhibit a significant feature of long-distance political activism. Since many of them had been able to obtain citizenship of their adopted country, they also engaged in multiple political activities, such as joining the communist party in the host country, and even at times becoming the official of the local governments. Some of them still tried to install 'leftist' government in

Indonesia. However, there was no single consensus over how the Indonesian diaspora should participate in the homeland's political landscape during this moment. In the 1980s, several political exiles in Europe visited Java and later followed this visitation of the Java-based activists to Europe. This was seen as the promising transnational political activism, in which would influence the growth of anti-Suharto movement during this period (Dragojlovic, 2010).

**Long-distance politics of Acehnese diaspora.** Compared to other ethnic-groups in Indonesia, it can be argued that Acehnese diaspora showed the most significant example of transnational politics. Even though the number of overseas Acehnese is considerably smaller compared to other ethnic groups, such as Javanese, the political activism of the Acehnese diaspora in their attempt to influence the homeland politics can be regarded as one of the most effective long-distance political forces on modern day's Indonesia. The local conflict for years in Aceh has been pointed out as the cause of the displacement of the Acehnese from their homeland as well as the motivation to further involved in the long-distance politics of Aceh and Indonesia, mainly related to the support to the GAM (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*, the Free Aceh Movement) political activities. A few scholars have written studies about both the GAM as well as the transnational politics of Acehnese diaspora, both which still related to those GAM's long-distance politics (Fallon, 2009; Missbach, 2012; Schulze, 2004).

Conflict in Aceh had started even since the struggle for independence from the Dutch in the colonial period, and still continuing in the post-independence Indonesia. Aceh, which was incorporated to Indonesia when the country declared its independence

in August 1945 attempted to disintegrate from Indonesia in the 1950s. A separatist movement began to spread in this region during this period. A former Aceh's governor, Daud Beureuh who supported the establishment of *Darul Islam* (the House of Islam) in Indonesia led the rebellion. Meanwhile, in New York City, Hasan di Tiro who was a student at Columbia University at that time and who worked at the Indonesian Consulate, tried to persuade various countries, mostly Asian and Middle East nations to support Beureuh's movement. Being able to play a diplomatic role in promoting the awareness of the conflict in Aceh to the international public, Tiro had an important role as a transnational political activist. He travelled throughout the US and European countries to request financial support for separatist movement of *Darul Islam* in the 1950s. Tiro's long-distance political activism had to be postponed when the armed conflict in Aceh began to decrease, especially when the Indonesian government gave Aceh a special status as an autonomous province in 1959 (Fallon, 2009; Missbach, 2011).

However, when the conflict started again in December 4, 1976, Hasan di Tiro formed GAM and declared Aceh's independence from Indonesia. Even though the Indonesian military was also able to end the GAM's struggle for separatism in 1979, many of the GAM members were able to escape from the country and went abroad. Apparently, numerous GAM supporters went to Libya and received military training aimed to return to Aceh to continue their fight for independence. In 1989 GAM was officially returned to Aceh, and they resumed their mission for separatism (Fallon, 2006; Schulze, 2004). As a result, in its attempt to counter the GAM insurgency mission, the Indonesian government had to declare Aceh as *Daerah Operasi Militer* (Military

Operation Area) started in 1990 and was continued until 1998. The conflict has killed at least 2,000 people, and many more of the Acehese have gone 'missing' (Amnesty International, 1993; Schulze, 2004). More than 20,000 Acehese were being displaced from their hometown, and they sought for refuge to other provinces and even further to neighboring countries like Malaysia (Hedman, 2005).

The first generations of Acehese diaspora were mainly migrants with economic or educational objectives. When the conflict occurred, the Acehese diaspora became dominated by refugees, a result of the three decades of violent conflict in their homeland. According to Missbach (2010), there were at least 100,000 Acehese diaspora abroad at the peak of the conflict in 2004 with the majority relocated to Malaysia and several hundreds diaspora fled to the US and Western European countries. While the migration of the Acehese to Malaysia had been prominent since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century during the anti-colonial war in Aceh, the recent migration during the post-independence armed conflict has further encouraged these people to move to Malaysia. This country was considered as the preferred destination for these refugees mainly due to the proximity of distance and culture between the two places (Missbach, 2007). In most cases, the Acehese diaspora established the Acehese communities in their host countries and showed a strong support to the political leadership of the separatist movement in exile.

According to Missbach (2012), after facing harsh conditions in the new home, many former guerilla separatist leaders in Malaysia felt they might not be secured enough in this country and then sought for asylum to Sweden in the 1980s. In Sweden, GAM leaders found themselves to be comfortable to practice the transnational politics related to

the conflict in Aceh. Missbach (2009) described the long-distance political activism of these members of diaspora as follow:

Although the guerillas in Aceh were defeated, the movement was never extinguished. GAM leaders continued their struggle for an independent Aceh as ‘armchair warriors’ from their living rooms in Stockholm and the busy trading hubs in Malaysia. Messengers and messages travelled back and forth between these places, even at times when airfares and modern telecommunication were far more expensive than they are today. (p. 26)

The foundation of the transnational political networks of GAM connecting Aceh, Malaysia, Australia, the US, and Sweden had been successfully established by Hasan Tiro. He held the command for the whole long-distance politics of the GAM from Sweden and was able to coordinate with his comrades in various countries with the main aim to support the war in Aceh. When visiting Tiro’s apartment in Stockholm, Missbach (2012) witnessed how his assistants coordinated with the GAM members, both in exiles and in Aceh, by using phone and text messages and said that one of Tiro’s assistants even claimed that GAM was one of the first groups that directed a war through text messages. Another form of transnational political activism of GAM was evident in the recruitment of Acehnese both from Aceh and abroad to join the GAM-sponsored military training in Libya. Since Tiro maintained a close relationship with Muammar Ghadafi, GAM found the training both significant and beneficial for its separatist movement. Thousands of Acehnese joined the training in Libya in the late 1980s and returned to Aceh to support the guerilla in the 1990s. When the guerilla war was found to be ineffective, many GAM

members moved to Malaysia and supported the homeland conflict from abroad (Missbach, 2009).

Missbach (2009) explained that GAM was able to maintain the guerilla wars for more than thirty years, mainly due to its ability to obtain a stable financial support. She further explained that while some of its sources of funding came from within Aceh, such as through GAM-collected taxes for local Acehnese and illegal businesses conducted by the GAM members, a significant financial contribution also came from Acehnese diaspora. For instance, Acehnese diaspora in Malaysia was told to collect money ranging from \$6 to \$8 per month back in the 1990s, with some of them said to donate around \$30,000 during the times of conflict. Meanwhile, in Scandinavia, many Acehnese diaspora felt obliged to donate no less than \$90 per month during the same periods. Most of the money went for weapons, ammunition, financial support for the GAM leaders' travel expenses, and even mobile phones (Missbach, 2009).

The use of media was also seen as one of the main tools for GAM to promote global awareness of its movement. The transcription and recording of Tiro's writings were distributed to the Acehnese diaspora and also aimed to gain Western countries' and NGO's sympathy. For instance, Malaysian-based GAM's magazine *Suara Aceh Merdeka* (the Voice of Free Aceh) was published to promote Tiro's ideology rather than just to give updated news of Aceh. Some articles were also used to provide information of various GAM activities in Western countries. When the Internet became more popular, GAM relied more in providing the news online (Missbach, 2009). Nevertheless, some of the website devoted to the spread the GAM's ideology still continued to operate even



after the Indonesian government and GAM had settled the conflict and signed the agreement following the great tsunami in 2004.

### **Indonesian Migrations to the United States**

Dissimilar to the case of transnational political engagement of Indonesians in European countries, such as those RMS, GAM, and socialist activists, Indonesian diaspora in the US tended to perform less radical political engagement in the homeland politics. Nevertheless, I will discuss how some features of Indonesian diaspora in the US resonate with the displacement experienced by those in other countries, which to some extent could be useful in the examination of their motives and modes of transnational political activism. The discussion will include a brief history of the migration of Indonesians to the US and how these people gradually developed their interest in the long-distance engagement of the homeland politics.

United States was not the main destination for many Indonesian migrants. As with other diaspora, Indonesians tended to migrate to relatively close regions; to travel to faraway country like America is often considered to be too costly. Moreover, the American immigration policy should also be considered as restricting the immigration of Asians, including Indonesians, especially prior to 1965. Previously, US congress had passed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 as the result of anti-Chinese sentiment, which banned the migration of Chinese workers to the US as well as prohibited them to obtain US citizenship (Hooper & Batalova, 2015). Moreover, the US Immigration Acts of 1917 and 1924, which were also banned Asians laborers to enter the US, contributed to the low level of Asian migration during these periods (Zong & Batalova, 2015). For these

reasons, there were not many Indonesians who migrated to America, until the 1965 Immigration and National Act was implemented, which allowing a more open migration policy. Additionally, unlike those Indonesians who migrated to the Netherlands, there was no direct colonial influence that could induce the Indonesians to migrate to the US. Therefore, to understand why in the present days, there is a growing number of Indonesians who became diaspora in this once unfavorable destination, I would like to discuss the story of early presence of Indonesians in America.

According to Cho (2011), early Indonesian migrants came to the US prior to the Second World War, or long before Indonesia gained its independence. During this period, many indigenous Indonesians migrated to the US along with Dutch migrants who brought the domestic and farm workers from the colony. Indonesians who worked as sailors also came with the Dutch ships at American ports like New York and Baltimore, Maryland. At that time, the US also had already established diplomatic relationship with the Dutch East Indies. This relationship also further encouraged the foreign exchanges between the two countries, in which included trade, missionary, and education exchanges. For instance, in 1939 a famous Balinese artist, Devi Dja came with her gamelan troops to America and was unable to return home because of the Second World War in the following years and decided to settle in the US (Suratmo, 2009).

The presence of the Indonesians in the US prior to the Second World War was also documented in 1938, when around 50 Indonesians came to New York City to attend the World Youth Congress (Sudjarwo, quoted in Widjanarko, 2007). Similarly, Indonesian organizations aimed to support the national independence movements were

also said to be present in big cities like Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco prior to August 17, 1945 (Bondan, 1971). Several Indonesian students who were sent to military school in Kansas by the Dutch government were recruited by the US Office of War Information to assist *the Voice of America (VOA)* to translate the news into *Bahasa Melayu* (the Malay language) in 1942. In the next year, *VOA* in San Francisco with the support of Indonesian staff members established a section that broadcast news in both *Bahasa Melayu* and Javanese to the audience in the Pacific aimed to support the Indonesian struggle against the Japanese at that time (“Sejarah Berdirinya,” 2002).

In the post Second World War, there was a gradual influx of Indonesians who came to the US mainly by sea route. Another group of Indonesians arrived in the New York City by the ship *Jan Steen* on January 2, 1946 (Cho, 2011). According to Widjanarko (2007), there was a trend that the sailors jumped off the ship and became immigrants in the ports like New York until the 1960s. Apparently, these early migrants also participated in a long-distance political activism in supporting their newly declared nation. For example, Widjanarko mentioned that Indonesian-national support group called *Persatuan Bangsa Indonesia* (the Indonesian People Association) was founded by members of Indonesian diaspora in New York and frequently held demonstrations in front of the United Nations office to confront the Dutch attempt to reoccupy Indonesia.

In addition to those earlier migrants, in the 1950s most of the distinctive presence of Indonesians living in the US came from Embassy employees along with their families. Within this period, another flow of Indonesians migrated to the US through educational exchange program. The US Department of State sponsored the International Cooperation

Administration (ICA), which later known as USAID program, was the main supporter of this scholarship for Indonesians to study at American universities. In 1953 the first students came from University of Indonesia's faculties to study at University of California at Berkeley and later followed by faculty members of Bandung Institute of Technology who came to study at University of Kentucky in 1956 (Yang, 2001). There was not much transnational political activism showed by these students. However, in the case of Indonesian students at UC Berkeley, when they returned to Indonesia many of them obtained various prestigious positions under Suharto's government mainly to develop the country's economics policy; and thus, given a nickname Berkeley Mafia (McCawley, 2008).

The domestic political situation had also forced ethnic-Chinese Indonesians to migrate to the US in the 1960s (Cho, 2011; Yang, 2001). Many of the Indonesian-Chinese at that time became the target of the political and ethnic conflict, since many of these people were seen as the supporter of Indonesian Communist Party, which was officially banned by the government when Suharto took over the Indonesian leadership from Sukarno in 1965-1967. A similar situation also occurred when the riot happened throughout Indonesia following the fall of Suharto's regime in 1998 had been followed by the anti-Chinese violence. As a result, no less than 20,000 of ethnic Chinese Indonesians sought for political asylum in the Western countries, especially the US. Thanks to the political lobbies to the American government made by Chinese American diaspora who were enraged by the anti-Chinese violence, thousands of the Indonesian-Chinese were granted asylum in the US (Sukmana, 2009).

The contemporary migration of Indonesians to the US mainly related to economics and educations mobility (Yang, 2001). Since many Indonesians thought that the US is one of the most developed countries in the world, it became one of the main desired destinations for the Indonesian migrants who wanted to seek a better life. Hugo (2007) reported that the US became one of the new destinations for contemporary Indonesian migration. He also found that there is an increasing trend among Indonesians who hold temporary visa, such as students, to apply for a permanent residence in the US. These two reasons were said by Hugo have contributed to the increasing number of Indonesian communities in this country. However, there are also several obstacles that might limit the massive flows of Indonesian migrants to the US, such as visa and cultural issues. It is more difficult for Indonesians to obtain working visa in the US compared to Malaysia or Middle East countries. Similar situation happened with the students who wanted to study in the US in addition to the financial issues. For many Indonesians, to go abroad is still considered as very expensive, and even to study or to get a job in a faraway country like America. As a result, the majority of Indonesians who came to the US and staying in a long term are using legal documents and most likely having a middle-class background. For people who came from a lower economic level, they might arrive with tourist visa and later decide to stay even though their documents have already expired (Setiyawan, 2014). According to Widjanarko (2007), the number of these people may even outnumber the legal Indonesian immigrant in the US.

Based on the US census data in 1990, there were only 30,085 Indonesians who live in the US while the number had increased to 63,073 in the 2000 (U. S. Department of

Commerce Economic and Statistics Administration, 1990; Hoeffle, Rastogi, Kim & Shahid, 2012). In terms of the demographic status of the Indonesians in the US, the number of females is slightly higher than the males, 53% compared to 47% and with the average age falls between 35-64 years with the median 33.1 years. Almost half of the Indonesian population in the US holds at least a bachelor degree (42.7%) with around 91.5% of the Indonesians finished the high school. With the average annual income only \$18,932, many Indonesians still live in poverty. There is a high number of Indonesians who work in professional and managerial jobs (39,4%) with some others work in service and sales areas (Ho, 2010). In a much more recent survey, Pew Research (2013) reported that there are 95,270 Indonesians in the US, with 88% of the adults were foreign-born. In terms of education, nearly half of the Indonesian diaspora population gained a bachelor degree or higher (49%) with 62% of them proficient in English.

Indonesian population is dispersed into different places in the US. According to Yang (2001), most of Indonesian diaspora live in major cities like Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, due to the higher chance to enter the job market as well as the presence of the already-established Asian communities in these places. A more detailed illustration of the Indonesian diaspora based on the states where they live category can be found in the table 2.1.

Table 2. 1.

*Some States Where Indonesians Live*

State	Population
California	39,506
New York	6,122
Texas	5,244
Washington, D. C. (metropolitan area)	3,895
Maryland	2,495
Virginia	2,351

*Note.* Adapted from U. S. Census Bureau (2010). *Asian American Data Links*. Retrieved from [https://www.census.gov/cic/data\\_links/asian\\_american\\_data\\_links.html](https://www.census.gov/cic/data_links/asian_american_data_links.html).

Having a slightly different reason to migrate overseas, Indonesian diaspora in the US tended to maintain a different attitude towards Indonesian political sphere compared to their counterparts in European countries. Indonesians in American might also perform a dissimilar political activism with the Indonesian left diaspora as well as other Indonesian exiles, such as those GAM and RMS activists. It is true that there were some members of Indonesian diaspora in the US who involved in political activism related to GAM, mainly Acehnese diaspora living in New York, but their conflict-generated political involvement has been declining in the post-conflict period. Recently, transnational political participation of Indonesia tended to focus on electoral politics (e.g., political campaigns and participating in elections) as well as non-electoral political

matters (e.g., joining homeland/diaspora associations, attending political meetings and sending money for development projects in the homeland).

What the main focus of this current research is, how the Indonesian diaspora in the US, having a different circumstance of displacement with their fellow diaspora in other part of the world perform transnational political participation with the contemporary homeland politics. In addition, a substantial attention is also given to how their experience of the long-distance politics is mediatized, such as through their media use and the consumption of the Indonesian political news supplied by the homeland media. As the focus of the study, a more detailed discussion follows on the socio-cultural context of the members of Indonesian diaspora in two metropolitan areas, Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles; this will be discussed in the Chapter V of this dissertation. In addition, the use of media for Indonesian diaspora's transnational-homeland political engagement is discussed in the Chapter VI, while the mediatization processes of their long-distance politics will be further explained in the Chapter VII and Chapter VIII.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, some historical overviews of the Indonesians' transnational migrations have been outlined in order to provide a 'steppingstone' in our understanding of the long-distance nationalism of Indonesian diaspora. Historically, many Indonesians travelled to faraway places despite the limitation of transportation technology in the pre-modern era. Most of the writings about the early migration of Indonesians to various places explained that the migration was more related to the cultural and maritime issues.



A much more politics-related transnational migration of Indonesian people began during the colonial periods. Many East Indies political activists were sent to exiles by the Dutch colonial government as far as South Africa. The subsequent phase of transnational migration was the result of labor-policy made by the Dutch, encouraging the assignment of East Indies natives to work at overseas plantations. For these people, economic factors became more influential as the major reason for the migration rather than other political issues. Meanwhile, when East Indies students sent abroad to study in the early 1900s, many of them developed transnational political activism when they advocated their homeland's independence from the Dutch. These members of educated-diaspora involved in political activism, joined the political parties in Europe, and created networks with another independence-struggle leaders from another countries. Several prominent students returned home and played significant roles in the struggle for the Indonesian independence movement.

The domestic political changes in the post-independence Indonesia had significant impact to the course of the next transnational migration of Indonesians. Beginning with the prohibition of the Indonesian leftist students and communist-affiliated Sukarno's supporters abroad to return home in 1965, they established diaspora in exile communities, performed long-distance political activism and tried to influence the homeland politics ever since. The political chaos in Indonesia at that time was also followed by the violent anti-Chinese movement, in which forced Indonesian-Chinese to leave the country and had resulted in the establishment of Indonesian diaspora in the Western countries like the Netherlands and also the US. Another separatist groups like GAM and RMS also

followed the similar route to these countries and performed another significant transnational political activism of the homeland.

While it may be true that the differences in terms of the route of migration and the reason of displacement both influenced the variation of the involvement of Indonesian diaspora with any homeland-related issue, this current study will eventually limit the discussion to the condition of Indonesians living in the US along with their transnational political participation with the Indonesian contemporary politics. Not only the Indonesian diaspora in the US are having a different story of migration, how they became involved in transnational political activism of the homeland politics is also both an interesting and important topic to discuss.

### **Chapter III: Literature Review**

This dissertation focuses on how the Indonesian diaspora in the US, especially in two metropolitan areas, Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles, engage in transnational politics through media. In addition to their long-distance political participation in homeland politics, how the Indonesian diaspora perform their distinctive ways of using media to consume media content from the country of origin will also be highlighted. Moreover, the Indonesian diaspora's experiences of physical displacement, their attitude toward homeland politics as well as their media environment will be included within the discussion of their long-distance political activism. As a result, this research is placed at an intersection of the fields of media studies, politics as well as diaspora and transnationalism. While examination of the complex relationship between media use and political participation has been considered important, especially in today's media-saturated society, this issue becomes more complicated when placed in the light of transnational political activism of diasporic people like the Indonesian diaspora in Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles. This dissertation aims to understand this intriguing phenomenon.

In the exploration of transnational engagement with the homeland politics of the Indonesian diaspora, I will discuss the appropriation of theories of diaspora, transnationalism and long-distance politics, in addition to the application of mediatization theory to understand the diasporic media behavior. I start this chapter with a discussion of contemporary debates on the concept of diaspora. How it is associated with the theory of transnationalism will be explicated in the same section. Moreover, how transnational

practice can be placed in the context of media use will be considered. In the subsequent section, I will address how the literature of transnational political participation can be appropriated into media studies, as in the case of media use for consuming political news from the country of origin. The final section is devoted to the examination of mediatization theory, how scholars define this particular theory as well as how it has been appropriated to investigate the contemporary complexity of the relationship between media and political scapes, especially with the notion that the political sphere has been ‘colonized’ by media (Meyer & Hinchman, 2002), thus highlighting the increasing role of media in transnational political participation by members of the diaspora.

### **Relationship Between Diaspora, Transnationalism and Media**

**Why diaspora matters?** While this dissertation focuses on the role of media in the diaspora’s transnational engagement in the home country’s affairs, it is important to briefly define diaspora (and transnationalism) before examining the relationship of this concept with media practice. The concepts of diaspora and transnationalism have been used either simultaneously or interchangeably in various studies related to human migrations in a globalized world (e.g., Cohen, 1997; Guarnizo & Smith, 1998; Karim, 2006). Diaspora can refer to something real like a community of displaced people but it can also be associated with something more abstract like a shared imagination of a sense of belonging to a community of the homeland (Johnson, 2012). Diaspora can be observed at a physical location but can also exist in virtual space (Cohen, 1997). According to Safran (1991), the term *diaspora* has been associated with the dispersion of Jews from their homeland and living as exiles while still maintaining their connections with the

homeland. He also added that members of a diasporic community should have some common characteristics, such as they or their ancestors having been dispersed from their origin center to several 'peripheral' countries or regions, maintaining a sense of belonging, preserving a collective myth or memory of their homeland, having a sense of alienation from the host society, and establishing connections with their homeland while hoping that one day they or their descendants will be able to return there. In contemporary discourse, diaspora can also be used to refer to other groups of dispersed people, such as immigrants, expatriates, and political refugees (Safran, 1991; Vertovec, 1997), and thus, reflects the fluidity of the concept of diaspora (Chari, 2014).

Diaspora comes from the Greek term *diaspeirein*, which means to sow or to scatter, and has been appropriated as an illustration of the dispersion of a population from their homeland to other places (Alonso & Oiarzabal, 2010). Cohen (1997) put diaspora into several categories based on the reasons for displacement, such as victim, labor, trade, or imperial, as well as cultural. The Chinese diaspora, categorized by Cohen as a labor diaspora, might have a different reason for displacement compared to a victim diaspora like the Armenians and Palestinians. Meanwhile, Tölölyan (1996) mentioned features of diaspora, which include a collective displacement from the homeland, an effort to return to the homeland, traumatic experience of the displacement from the original land, collective memory of the place of origin, and sustained connections among the diaspora with the homeland. Within this sense, the concept of diaspora should never be applied only to the Jews since many other diasporic groups may also exhibit some of these features. Connor (1986), for example, even argued that any displaced population living

not in their country of origin could be seen as diaspora. Consequently, starting from the late 1960s, research on diaspora other than the classical study of the Jewish diaspora has mushroomed (Braziel & Mannur, 2003; Cohen, 1997).

While the notion of diaspora has been appropriated in multiple ways, scholars still argue that the concept of diaspora is beneficial in understanding the relationships between migration and the maintaining of connections that overcome nation-state borders, which may include experiencing more than a singular sense of belonging and loyalty (Dayan, 1999; Gillespie, 1995; Karim, 2002). However, for many members of diaspora, the issue of a sense of belonging and loyalty is also problematic. It may be true that the more time diaspora spent in the country of settlement, the more their loyalty to the home country decreased, as is suggested by the assimilation theory (Ramakrishnan & Espenshade, 2001). Nevertheless, Georgiou (2006) found that how people in diaspora, especially those who migrated to the Western hemisphere, experienced regular exclusion and exploitation encouraged them to fight for recognition and participation. Even though time has passed, as argued by Georgiou, it does not mean that the majority of the diaspora have been excluded from such marginalization despite some of them gaining very respectable positions in the host countries. Maintaining regular connections with the homeland, through media and other communicative activities, may be seen as a logical choice for diaspora as a way to deal with the exclusion and marginalization from the host society (Kim, 2011). Still, it is also important to understand the factors that determine the willingness of the members of diaspora to engage in discussion of everyday matters of the country of origin, such as consuming political news from the home country and

getting involved in the homeland's political discussion, rather than simply referring to disengagement from the host society as their main reason to preserve such long-distance participation.

The advancement of media and communication technology also challenges the appropriation of diaspora, especially in how displaced people use media to advance their connections with the country of origin. In the past these connections had been limited due to the absence of real-time and relatively cheap communication technology. Nowadays, Fortunati, Pertiera and Vincent (2012) argued, the increasing popularity of advanced information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as online media, even mobile media, should be seen as opening a wider opportunity for diaspora not only to maintain the preexisting contact with the home country but to further engage with various diasporic participations. Consequently, the increasing availability of these newer media technologies can be argued to encourage transnational activism of people in diaspora with their respective homelands.

In discussing the relationship between diaspora and the media environment, Fortunati, et al. (2012) explained that new media, "...are important communicative environments because they have their own particular transformative potential and so they contribute, along with the old media, to co-construct a different ecosystem of migrations" (pp. 10-11). Following this assumption, an ever-changing communication environment in diaspora, such as newer media like the Internet and smart phones in the already existing traditional media platforms, can further complicate the experience of diaspora especially in how they maintain their networks with people in the country of origin. This is one of

the promising areas of study that have recently attracted attention from scholars of media, diaspora and migration studies (Denison & Johanson, 2012; Evers & Goggin, 2012; Madianou & Miller, 2012; Pertierra, 2012; Tsagarousianou, 2004). There is considerable interest in the exploration of the members of diaspora who use media to maintain involvement in the affairs of the country of origin, how media are being appropriated for such long-distance engagement, and why. The purpose of this study is to expand the existing research on diasporic communities by highlighting the media's capability not only to further encourage diasporic participation but also how media may limit the transnational engagement of diaspora in the homeland's everyday matters. Primary attention will be given to the involvement of diaspora members in transnational political practices of the home country.

**Understanding transnationalism.** In an attempt to better understand the relationship between diaspora, transnationalism and media, I will start the discussion by posing one question: What differentiates diaspora and transnationalism? Knowles (2003), in her explanation of the concepts of diaspora and transnationalism said, "the two concepts are not distinct, but bleed into each other in describing similar sets of people, circumstances and social processes" (p. 155). Vertovec (1999) further explained that, "transnationalism, as social morphology, refers to the social formations of structures spanning across borders. Diasporas are a good example" (p. 451). Based on his argument, diaspora can be considered as part of transnationalism. Therefore, the practice of transnationalism is highly regarded in the case of diaspora. The problem is, not all members of diaspora are practicing transnationalism since it requires regular



transnational connections. Additionally, people in diaspora who refused to maintain connections with their homeland cannot be called transnational people (Pasura, 2012). Nevertheless, the relationships between diaspora and transnationalism are at present questionable, especially when we take into account the increasing availability of multiple media and communication technologies that could further connect, or disconnect, displaced nationals with people and events at the country of origin.

The concept of transnationalism has been associated with the notion that despite their physical displacement from the homeland, international migrants do not automatically substitute their old home, the country of origin, with the new one, the country of settlement, especially when these people have maintained their involvement in the long-distance practices with the homeland (Knowles, 2003). Glick-Schiller, Basch and Blanc (1995) explained that the term *transnationalism* was first widely used within academic discourse to refer to the flow of ideas and political institutions beyond national borders. Additionally, Faist (2000) described transnationalism as a concept that refers to, “sustained ties of persons, networks, and organizations across the borders across multiple nation-states, ranging from little to highly institutionalized forms” (p. 189). Similarly, Basch, Glick-Schiller and Blanc (1994) explained transnationalism as:

The process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders. (p. 7)

Meanwhile, Guarnizo, Portes and Haller (2003) emphasized that the core of transnationalism is regular cross border practices of the dispersed people, whether they are activists or entrepreneurs. Therefore, the regularity of connections that cross national borders can be seen as the main feature of transnationalism. Moreover, transnationalism can be categorized as ‘transnationalism from above’ when transnational practices are encouraged by political institutions, media and global corporations; and ‘transnationalism from below’ when transnational activities emerge from grass-root levels (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998; Vertovec, 2009).

Transnationalism, like any other social concept, cannot escape criticism. Several scholars fear that transnationalism overemphasizes the nation-level analysis, and is thus considered to be overvaluing the role of the nation-state in cross-border movements (Wimmer & Glick-Schiller, 2003). Other researchers, such as Ruby-Ling (2013), remind us that transnational practices are often situated in, “mundane, local and everyday spaces” (p. 15). Therefore, an examination of the transnational phenomenon should not rely too much on a macro-level analysis like the nation-state level but needs to pay closer attention to cross-border movements and connections that occur in everyday life, which are more visible to ordinary people including researchers. Furthermore, since many transnational activities happen at the local level, it is also important to pay attention to the particular context in which that long-distance practice is situated. This current study aims to examine the practice of transnationalism using a grounded approach, with emphasis on the exercise of transnational political participation of the members of diaspora with their homeland at the local level in the country of settlement.

Moreover, rather than seeing transnational connection as regular and fix-patterned activities, Mercer, Page and Evans (2008) suggested considering transnational communication as irregular, unsystematic, and sporadic. In this view, it would be more difficult to find similarities between one transnational communication practice and another. The cross-border communication with the homeland of the Indonesian diaspora would be different than that of the Malaysian diaspora, for instance. Consequently, it is more important to explore how the long-distance connections between one particular diasporic group with its country of origin is unique rather than simply making comparisons. This current study examines how the Indonesian diaspora in two different locales, Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles, are performing their own distinct transnational political practice, and eventually to explore what their similarities are as well as how they developed their own trans-local connections, in terms of their long-distance engagement in Indonesian political discourse.

**Diaspora, transnational practice and media.** Before discussing the relationship between diaspora, transnational, and media, I will briefly outline the role of the concept of nationalism in the contemporary discourse of media and globalization. Benedict Anderson was an early prominent scholar who brought the concept of nationalism, with its relationship with media, to the academic discussion. He explained that some people need and want nationalism and many of them are willing to die for the sake of their nationalism. While many nations might take nationalism for granted, some people are still struggling to construct what they believe to be nationalism. Anderson's book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, first

published in 1983, is arguably one of the finest works on this topic. Using strong historical analysis, Anderson helped us trace back the origins of nationalism as well as promoting intellectual debates surrounding this concept.

Anderson began his analysis of nationalism by asking why discussion of this topic is still relevant. He argued that not only is the concept of nation-ness an important value in today's political life but there is still no 'scientific definition' of the concept of the nation at that time. Therefore, Anderson (2006) tried to propose his own concept of nation, which he defined as, "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (p. 6). Furthermore, it is explained that the nation is made by such an imagination among its very own and limited political community in its own sovereign nation. These fellow-members do not have to know each member of the nation but are bonded by their collective imagination of the community, which Anderson argued could be generated through the collective consumption of mass media. This definition is quite different than previous interpretations of nation/nationalism from scholars who suggested nationalism was invented or fabricated and never came from the self-conscious of its very own people. Anderson criticized this previous assumption and called it misleading because we can also interpret this 'invention' as a process of imagining and creating the nation as well as coming from people's self-consciousness.

Anderson further argued that modern imagined communities are linked not only by a 'national' language but also (and even mainly) by 'print capitalism'. He later explained that religious communities, along with dynastic realism, were losing their authoritative role, thus allowing the emergence of imagined communities of nations.

Anderson paid a great deal of attention to the discussion of print media as one of the significant factors that construct the imagined communities of modern nations. The power of print capitalism, particularly in the case of novels and newspapers, is quite apparent in disseminating ideas and thoughts of imagined communities. Moreover, print capitalism also has the ability to connect people through simultaneous consumption of newspapers or books, thus creating a readership connection. As noted by Anderson, this shared experience of readership gradually constructs a sense of communality among the people within certain boundaries.

Furthermore, a sense of being fellow-readers also became possible through the ‘singularity’ of language being used in the media. In the case of *Bahasa Indonesia*, which is used in the mainstream national media, it helps the Indonesian society—consisting millions of people from different ethnicities, religions, and local languages—to construct their national consciousness, imagination and the sense of belonging as one nation and as fellow Indonesians. On the other hand, *Bahasa Indonesia* is also able to differentiate the native with the colonial. Consequently, this kind of ‘imagination of a nation’ will encourage intra-national connection among people within the state-borders, and thus, amplify their sense of nationalism as an Indonesian. Moreover, as early as 1926, the use of this language had been propagated by nationalist leaders as the symbol of unity (Das Gupta, 1970). Accordingly, Anderson (1966) argued that *Bahasa Indonesia*, “has had to develop into means of communication which can not only express Indonesian nationalism, but Indonesian aspirations, Indonesian traditions and “International realities” – within the limits of a single vocabulary” (p. 89).

Beyond the discussion of nation building, it is also argued that the concept of nation alongside nationalism and national identities is being challenged by globalization. There are trends that people in various countries are becoming what they consider global citizens and cosmopolitan (Bowden, 2003; Carter, 1997). While Catterral (2011) argued that globalization does not simply displace nation-building processes; he also thought the concept of imagined communities should be reconfigured in this era of globalization. Moreover, globalization allows the enhancement of transnational flows of people, capital, and especially media contents, and thus, the previous concepts of imagined communities that constitute the nation, as posted by Anderson, need to be expanded. It is necessary to ask whether media have a similar role in the case of transnationalism.

One of the simplest ways to explain the relationship between transnationalism and the media is through close examination of transnational media. According to Potter (2003), the idea of transnationalism was first adapted to the discussion about transnational media, especially in the context of how the British empire used newspapers to connect all its colonies with their imperial perspectives. In a more recent example, Fazal (2007) mentioned the role of transnational media outlets such as *CNN* and *BBC World* as similar to the imperial media during the British colonial period, except the modern transnational media are expanding their coverage in order to gain a wider audience across nation-borders.

The presence of these transnational media outlets allows their audience access to a more diverse media content rather than news and entertainment contents just from their respective countries. However, some scholars turn their attention not to these

transnational media organizations but to how transnational people use media in order to obtain information about their homeland (Bailey, 2007; Ogan, 2001). The problem is, much important information about the homeland may not always be available on transnational media. For instance, the Indonesian diaspora in the US rarely find regular needed news about their country of origin on *CNN* or *BBC America*. This encourages them to find such information through the homeland media rather than the host country mainstream or even transnational media. Accordingly, in the case of Turkish migrants in Amsterdam, Ogan (2001) found that these displaced people preferred to consume Turkish media available in the Netherlands. In another case, Bailey (2007) found that Latin American immigrants in the UK thought British mainstream media were both underrepresenting and misrepresenting the immigrants, even though the host country media helped these transnational people learn about the culture in the country of settlement. As a result, Bailey argued that Latin Americans living in the UK preferred to use Latin media.

From these previous studies, it was evident that homeland media consumption is essential in these transnational people's daily life. While the presence of the home country's media was visible in the case of the diaspora in Europe, this might not be the case with a smaller diasporic community where their homeland media are not always available. For example, other than some print newspapers and magazines produced by members of the diaspora in the US, the Indonesians in North America do not have a privileged position like the diaspora in European countries in terms of regular access to media from the country of origin. Consequently, it is unclear whether media play a

similar role for a smaller diaspora community like the Indonesian diaspora in the US when the (homeland) media availability is one of the problems.

In the recent discussion of diaspora and media, in addition to traditional media like print media and broadcast television, scholars found an increasing trend in the use of network technologies such as the Internet and social media as new modes of connections and affiliations as well as an arena of identity negotiation (Christensen, 2012; Koukoutsaki-Monnier, 2012; Mainsah, 2014). Additionally, Brinkerhoff (2009) argued that the Internet's interactivity feature has become an efficient tool for diaspora to share their experience, which eventually enables the creation of online communities. Oiarzabal (2012) even stated that, "diasporas are networks of transnational migrant communities comparable to nodes (individuals, groups, or organisations) in a social network connected by a set of affiliations" (pp. 1469-1470). Therefore, it can be argued that there might be an overlap characteristic of diaspora and the network society, mainly due to shared common features, such as being constructed by ties of nodes across different places to connect their members. In the case of a digital diaspora, transnational people can be seen as an online network community of displaced people maintaining ties with their homeland as well as attempting to connect with fellow nationals from different places, mainly through digital media like the Internet and social network sites. Yet, many studies overlooked the role of online media and underestimated the existence of traditional platforms in diaspora. Few investigations focused on exploration of how the members of diaspora used polymedia to perform transnational practices (Madianou & Miller, 2012). Thus, closer empirical examination of how diaspora use newer media technologies along



with traditional media platforms to practice transnational connections with their home country is considered important.

### **Transnational Political Engagement and Media Use**

**Understanding transnational politics.** The democratization process in a country to some extent contributes to the re-appropriation of transnational political actions of its citizens abroad. While in the past, political activists displaced from the homeland, such as those who were sent into exile by the home country's government, tended not to be welcome to participate in the homeland's political sphere. In a more recent era where more countries perform democratic governance, it can be argued that long-distance politics or transnational political participation of nationals abroad is more acceptable to the country of origin. Transnational politics is evident in several practices of transnational people's engagement with their homeland's political discourse, such as actively consuming home country's political news, participating with their home country's elections and becoming a member in the home country's political institutions.

In her study of Turks and Kurds in Europe, Østergaard-Nielsen (2003a) defined political transnational practices as:

Various forms of direct cross-border participation in politics of their country of origin by both migrants and refugees (such as voting and other support to political parties, participating in debates in the press), as well as indirect participation via the political institutions of the host country (or international organization). (p. 762)

This definition tries to cover both broad and narrow conceptualizations of transnational political engagement. In different words, Benedict Anderson also offers the term *long-distance politics* to illustrate the increasing participation by nationals abroad, such as diaspora in participating in the homeland politics through various modes. Anderson (1992) identified long-distance politics as the various modes of involvement of nationals abroad with the homeland policies with the emphasis on the maintained connections through contemporary communication technologies. Moreover, he argued that long-distance politics is associated with the idea of long-distance nationalism. In Anderson's (1998) words:

... today's long distance nationalism strikes one as a probably menacing portent for the future. First of all, it is the product of capitalism's remorseless, accelerating transformation of all human societies. Second, it creates a serious politics that is at the same time radically unaccountable. The participant rarely pays taxes in the country in which he does his politics; he is not answerable to its judicial system; he probably does not cast even an absentee ballot in its elections because he is a citizen in a different place; he need not fear prison, torture or death, nor need his immediate family. But, well and safely positioned in the First World, he can send money and guns, circulate propaganda, and build intercontinental computer circuits, all of which can have incalculable consequences in zones of their ultimate destinations. (p. 74)

In a similar tone, Glick-Schiller (2007) explained her use of the term *long-distance nationalism* as follows:

...a set of identity claims and practices that connect people living in various geographic locations to a specific territory that they see as their ancestral home. Actions taken by long-distance nationalists on behalf of this reputed ancestral home may include voting, demonstrating, lobbying, contributing money, creating works of art, fighting, killing and dying. (p. 570)

Anderson (1998) further explained that for long-distance political activists, political participation with homeland politics should not be seen as serendipitous since their diasporic political engagement is more likely self-chosen. When mentioning the relationship between homeland politics and diaspora, Anderson (1998) also explained, “that same metropole that marginalizes and stigmatizes him simultaneously enables him to play, in a flash, on the other side of the planet, national hero” (p. 74). In this sense, even though people in the homeland might marginalize their fellow nationals abroad, this does not mean the political roles of those people in diaspora become less important. As a matter of fact, in various cases, the involvement of people in diaspora with the homeland politics is highly encouraged, or even highly expected, especially when there is conflict in the homeland, as in the case of the Free Aceh Movement’s long-distance politics in Aceh, Indonesia, as discussed in the previous chapter. Similar to Glick-Schiller (2007), Missbach (2012) also mentioned that long-distance politics can be performed through several activisms, such as political lobbying, arranging charity events for the homeland, sending remittances, helping refugees, and promoting awareness of certain issues concerning the country of origin. A more radical involvement of long-distance politics,

she argued, can also take the form of participating in wars and conflicts as well as acts of terrorism.

It has been argued that the transnational connection between diaspora and the homeland has been escalated by means of modern communication and transportation technology. However, Skrbiš (2001) explained that the practice of transnational politics has been exhibited for centuries, predating modern communication technologies like the Internet, that enable constant contact between homeland and diaspora. He suggested that transnational politics is more associated with the idea of nationalism. Skrbiš mentioned an example of long-distance politics when the Irish in the US tried to attack Canada as part of their transnational national activism to liberate Ireland. He further argued that long-distance politics is not only a matter of communication and media technology but is also about national, ethnic and political imagination. Within this sense, Skrbiš's argument demands a more holistic empirical inquiry in which transnational politics should not be limited to media phenomena, but should also consider the role of non-media factors like nationalism, ethnicity and preexisting political attitude. Yet, little research has examined in detail the interplay between these factors in the context of members of diaspora's transnational political participation in today's media-saturated global society.

Itzigsohn and Villacres (2003) differentiated between two categories of transnational political participation: electoral participation and non-electoral participation. They explained that electoral participation mainly refers to political activities related to their home country's election, such as participating in voting, campaigning, or joining a political party. In contrast, non-electoral participation refers to

activities such as engagement with hometown associations and home country's community organizations, which some scholars labeled civic participation (Hickerson, 2013; McLeod, Kosicki & McLeod, 2002). While transnational political participation in the electoral participation category tends to be limited to a particular period of time, such as during political campaigns and national, local, or presidential elections, the exploration of non-electoral political participation is more flexible and could involve a range of topics, including appropriation of political news consumption in the daily practices of those living in diaspora. Moreover, scholars found that non-electoral political participation would eventually lead to involvement in more serious political activities (Ayala, 2000; Galston, 2001; Itzigsohn, 2000).

In addition, transnational activities can be differentiated between core and expanded transnationalism, where the first refers to regular and patterned activities and the latter is associated with irregular and infrequent activities (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b). Everyday involvement of transnational politics exhibited by diaspora cannot be simply placed in one or the other category. It is more likely that the engagement in long-distance politics of the homeland exhibited by diaspora is moving between the core and expanded transnationalism where patterned political involvement might intertwine with irregular engagement with the homeland politics. On one hand, those diaspora who regularly consume homeland political news during elections might not follow such news regularly outside the election period. On the other hand, diaspora are interested in the homeland political discussion in their daily lives but might become actively involved when they are attracted to certain political parties or candidates during the election

periods. Nevertheless, the differentiation between electoral and non-electoral as well as the core and expanded transnational political participations should not be seen as a dichotomy but rather as the dualist nature of transnational political participation.

Previously, Anderson (1992) explained there is a strong relationship between immigrants and long-distance politics, especially while displaced people are still attempting to maintain connections with their homeland. Moreover, he argued, transnational people with only a tenuous attachment to their host country would have a greater chance to participate with long-distance politics. In another study, Oke (2012) found that transnational people who may be politically and socially marginalized by both their host country and their home country might be encouraged to participate with transnational politics. Although Anderson used the term *long-distance politics*, within this study his concept will be called transnational politics. Moreover, both concepts focus mainly on the capability of transnational people to participate within their home country's political sphere.

There is growing interest in the scholarship of transnational politics, especially since many governments allow their overseas citizens to be involved in political events, such as participating in their home country's election (Hickerson, 2013). Although a considerable amount of study has addressed this long-distance political opportunity (Senay, 2013; Quinsaat, 2013), rather less attention has been given to examination of who are participating in this kind of transnational politics, their reasons for participating, and their modes of participation. Furthermore, Guarnizo et al. (2003) assumed that current literature on transnational politics is over-optimistic regarding transnational people's

participation. They argued that studies on long-distance politics tend to think that all members of diaspora are participating in this cross-border political engagement, while in many cases transnational participation is limited. Consequently, defining the current state of diaspora's engagement in transnational-homeland politics remains problematic.

I argue that we should be cautious not to overlook the possibility that the whole diaspora population has an equal opportunity to engage in transnational practice. There are many factors, in both media and non-media dimensions, that should be included in our understanding of the nature of long-distance political engagement. This study offers a further exploration of the complexity of transnational political participation with a focus on the socio-cultural variables including diasporic conditions, in addition to the media environment, which influence inclusion and/or exclusion of the members of diaspora in long-distance political practices.

**Determining factors of long-distance politics.** Various factors can be attributed to the motives of transnational people like diaspora to participate with homeland politics. According to Guarnizo et al. (2003), in the case of the transnational political behavior of the Latin American diaspora in the US, several individual characteristic issues, like gender and age, are mentioned as important. For example, their study found that males in diaspora were more likely than their female counterparts to be engaged with political issues of the country of origin. Similarly, Jones-Correa (1998) argued that men tend to participate in transnational-homeland politics mainly for two reasons. First, the male-dominated nature of Latin American politics contributed to men's engagement in national politics when they are abroad. Second, transnational-homeland political participation was

seen as a compensation for the downgrading of occupational mobility experienced when some men migrated to the country of settlement. For many cases, some male migrants who came to the US had to leave higher-level occupations back home in exchange for lower-level jobs in the host country. As a result, Jones-Correa said, these male diaspora have a tendency to further participate with their homeland politics to compensate.

Although Jones-Correa's (1998) study indicated male supremacy in the political sphere resulted in gender bias in political participation, there is little knowledge of a case when the home country's political sphere is less male-dominated. For example, it is difficult to say that Indonesian politics is male-dominated since the country once had a female president, and the state's constitution requires that at least 30 percent of the parliamentary seats be allocated to female politicians. In view of this, it is questionable whether political engagement of Indonesians, mainly those living in diaspora, is less prevalent for females as argued by Jones-Correa. Likewise, the migration phenomenon is not always male-centric since many of members of diaspora are female. According to Zlotnik (2003), the number of females who migrated to foreign countries is almost the same as their male counterparts, and has reached 51 percent in developed countries. Consequently, these displaced females might have experienced a similar downgrade of occupational mobility as did the men, which Jones-Correa argued was one of the motivations for transnational political participation.

Meanwhile, based on Leal, Lee and McCann's (2012) study, cost was found to be one major reason why a relatively low number of Mexicans in the US participated in homeland politics, especially to vote in the national election of the country of origin.



They further explained that though voting in general is seen as a low-cost activity, this is not the case with Mexican transnational voters. There is a \$14 fee, to have the ballot delivered through the international postal service from Mexico to the US and returned to Mexico. Potential voters need to register at least six months in advance of an election to be able to participate. Moreover, Leal, Lee and McCann (2012) argued, the absence of campaign mobilization from homeland politicians in the host country, forbidden by the home country's political system, contributes to the members of diaspora's low participation in the homeland elections.

While this was evident in the Mexican diaspora in the US, little is known about other diasporic communities' engagement in long-distance electoral participation. For some, the cost may not always be a problem, either because they come from a higher socio-economic class or because the voting cost is becoming more affordable. Moreover, homeland politicians, from Taiwan to Liberia, are increasingly coming to the host countries in their attempts to reach the diaspora as potential voters (Ives, 2015; Paarlberg, 2015). These factors, previously considered obstacles, might, in turn, become opportunities for people in diaspora to engage in the home country's electoral processes, an avenue for a further empirical investigation.

A much more detailed discussion of the determining factors of transnational political participation has been outlined by Østergaard-Nielsen (2003b). She differentiated between two locations where we should identify factors that may influence migrant engagement with transnational politics: sending country (homeland) and receiving country (host land). She argued of homeland factors that political conditions in

the country of origin may gain sympathy from diaspora, especially during crisis. For instance, when the home country was facing economic crisis recently, many Greek diaspora showed their concern for their country of origin, some even blamed the homeland's government for the crisis (Zikakou, 2015). Similarly, Svoboda and Pantuliano (2015) discussed how Syrian diaspora concerned with the political condition of the homeland become actors in providing humanitarian aid to the people back home as well as to the Syrian refugees. These examples demonstrate how people in diaspora pay more attention to the country of origin when there is a problem with the homeland. Nevertheless, little information provided by previous studies explains why people in diaspora continue to maintain a high level of attention even when there is no major problem in the country of origin (Missbach, 2012).

Related to the practice of transnationalism above, Østergaard-Nielsen (2003b), too, mentioned the role of the home country's government in embracing the diaspora. Smith (1999) separated the home country's role into applying homeland policies and global nation policies. The first is associated with the idea that the government of the country of origin aims to invite the diaspora to return home while the second one is more permissive by letting the diaspora to stay abroad as long as they maintain connections and contribute to the home country. Even when the diaspora remained overseas, the home country's government expected some benefits which may include remittance contributions, support from foreign political lobbying, or investments in human capital (Shain, 1989; Bauböck, 2001).

Transnational academic exchange, state-sponsored student exchange for example, could be placed in this category since it is seen as promoting the state ideology of the sending country (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b). In the case of Indonesia, what happened was the opposite. When the Indonesian government sent students to study economics at UC Berkeley in the 1950s, many of them, nicknamed the Berkeley Mafia, when they returned home were appointed to prestigious positions in the Indonesian government's economic policy sectors. They were accused of implementing an American capitalism economic model when they were involved in Indonesian's economic development planning during Suharto's regime (McCawley, 2008).

In similar fashion, political intervention practiced by the homeland government in diaspora might also be counted on to limit transnational political participation of nationals abroad. One of the most common examples is the homeland's political policy that disallows citizens living in diaspora from participating in the home country's elections. In the case of political exiles, the Indonesian government, through its embassies, has even threatened to revoke the passports of Indonesian political activists in diaspora if they continued their political activism in exile (Hill, 2010). There have been various attempts by the homeland government to pressure the host government to ban certain political activism that might be seen as a threat to the homeland government (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b), especially in the case of diasporic political activism of dissident groups. An Indonesian separatist group, the Free Papua Movement in Australia, for example, accused the Indonesian government of using Indonesian students as spies,

which was considered as a threat by the homeland government against transnational political activism abroad (Day, 2015; Fitzsimmons, 2014).

Moreover, Østergaard-Nielsen (2003b) encouraged including the context of the host country in determining the degree of transnational political participation of diaspora. She argued, in the context of the country of settlement, several factors contribute to whether the displaced nationals are willing to engage with long-distance politics. These factors are, “(a) mode of migration; (b) length of stay; (c) migrant/refugees’ structural position in the receiving countries; as well as (d) political opportunity structures for migrant’s political participation” (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b, p. 18). In the case of mode of migration, some studies indicate that refugees are more likely to engage with homeland politics than are economic migrants (Missbach, 2012; Portes, Guarnizo & Landolt, 1999). However, this cannot be generalized to all refugees since some of them might want to forget bitter experiences with the home country that displaced them from the homeland and have nothing at all to do with homeland politics.

The length of stay is said to contribute to the willingness of diaspora to participate in transnational politics (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b). Research on various diaspora members in the US demonstrated that the more time spent in the host country, the more likely that diaspora will be distant to the home country (Hill & Moreno, 1996; Uhlaner, Cain & Kiewiet, 1989). Portes (2001) even argued that long-distance politics tends to be, “a one-generation phenomenon” (p. 190) since the second and third generations are more concerned with issues of the country of settlement. Furthermore, the more recent generation of diaspora tends to be involved in the host country’s political issues, such as

in the case of Asian-American political lobbyists in US politics (e.g., Aoki & Takeda, 2008; Lai, 2011; Tsung, 2005). Additionally, the longer foreign migrants stay in one country, the greater the chance that their homeland identification will become dematerialized (Miller, 1981). In contrast, Ramakrishnan and Espenshade (2001) found that the latecomer diaspora exhibited more participation in the home country's political affairs compared to the newer diaspora, thus, challenging the common assumption that argues assimilated diaspora tend to be disengaged from transnational practices (Levitt, 2003). As a result, this inconsistency within the literature of this topic requires further empirical exploration of whether the length of stay contributes to long-distance homeland political engagement.

The current position held by diaspora in the adopted country is another factor that may influence these displaced citizens to participate in the home country's political sphere (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b). The more diaspora are alienated within the society of the host country, the more they are engaged in homeland-related matters. Where the host society is hostile toward immigrants, it is more likely that members of diaspora perform what Portes (1999) called, "reactive identity" (p. 465). Inevitably, experiencing difficulty in adapting to the society of the country of settlement, diaspora tend to maintain their ties with their country of origin, including the political issues back home. Where members of diaspora find marginalization and discrimination from the host society, they turn to their ethno-national identifications, which eventually further engage them with the homeland (Kim, 2011; Schiffauer, 1999).

Moreover, Østergaard-Nielsen (2003b) stated that whether members of diaspora obtain political chances to involve themselves in the host country's political sphere is another determining factor in diaspora's engagement with home country politics. She further argued that when members of diaspora have been granted citizenship in the adopted country, they have the opportunity to participate in the host country's politics, thus, distancing them from their homeland's political sphere. In the case of the Indonesian diaspora, those who obtained a foreign country's citizenship are forbidden to participate in Indonesian elections. However, this does not mean that these displaced nationals could not participate in non-electoral political issues. With diaspora in Germany naturalized migrants need to give up citizenship in their country of origin before they will be incorporated into the host country's political sphere (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b). A more inclusive political system in the Netherlands, however, does not limit the diaspora's ethno-national political participation with the home country (Faist, 2000). Similarly, the more open political system in the US has enabled members of diaspora to participate in the political sphere of either their home country or the host country (Arthur, 1991; Mollenkopf & Hochschild, 2010).

Additionally, Leal et al. (2012) suggested that the participation level of transnational people in political events in their home countries is greatly influenced by factors like socioeconomic status, distance from the country borders, and the availability of ethnic media. While socioeconomic status and distance from home country can be seen as barriers that further marginalize transnational people from their home country's politics, the availability of their transnational-home country media can be seen as an

opportunity to have wider access to participate with their home country's politics. Moreover, in today's era of global media, having access to various media channels from other countries is no longer difficult. Consequently, this study suggests, media are becoming central in mediating transnational people to participate with their home countries' politics, both electoral and non-electoral. The problem is, even though we may know that media have a significant role in enabling transnational people to engage with the political-scape in their countries of origin, we cannot say there are no obstacles that might exclude some members of the diasporic community from participating in transnational political practice. While some issues have been discussed in previous studies, further exploration of why some diaspora may still be unable to optimize the availability of various media platforms to remain involved in their homeland's politics is still needed.

#### **Media use for political participation.**

*Media's role in political communication.* Being a politician means that one needs to perform political communication both to the policymakers and to the constituents, on a regular basis. In general, political communication can be performed in a non-mediated communication environment, such as face-to-face lobbying or in mediated communication situations like broadcasting a speech to the public. In more recent days, the need to deliver political content to a broader audience has made the role of media in political communication more significant. According to Louw (2005), in a liberal democracy system, the relationship between media and politics can be conceptualized into an intertwined concept of media as the 'Fourth Estate' practicing 'watchdog'

journalism. He further explained, that within this conceptualization the role of media is primarily related to three major functions: criticizing the government, supporting public rights against the misconduct of power exhibited by the government, and serving as a public sphere for healthy debates among the citizens.

Since informed citizens have been found to be necessary in the process of democratization (Dahl, 1998), various studies have focused on how media have influenced the process of disseminating political messages to the media audience, especially in how the media are affecting public attitudes and behavior toward politics (Bartels, 1993; Delli Carpini, 2012; Norris, 2000). It is true that some scholars have found a close relationship between news consumption and political behavior; thus, media are considered as enabling political engagement of the public (Katz & Rice, 2002; Shah, Kwak & Holbert, 2001). Moreover, the use of various media has been found to be useful in providing citizens with knowledge and information on politics (Delli Carpini, Keeter & Kennamer, 1994), which increases their chance to engage with the political sphere. However, extensive use of media might also be seen as reducing the free time of the audience, which might result in alienation from political engagement (Kraut, Patterson, Lundmark, Kiesler, Mukopadhyay & Scherlis, 1998). People who spend too much time in front of a television, for example, may disengage from civic and political activism in the real world (Putnam, 2000), one of the reasons why some people argue that media have a negative influence on the democratization process (Hickerson, 2013).

Gil de Zúniga, Veenstra, Vraga and Shah (2010) differentiated between the terms *political participation* and *political expression*. They explained that the first concept is



associated more with political actions and the latter refers to political talks. However, political expression is still correlated with political participation (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995) and is even considered an antecedent for political action (Gil de Zúñiga, Molyneux & Zheng, 2014). Similarly, Salzman (2011) argued that political interest is an important factor that may contribute to the level of political participation, especially political interest that is promoted by news media consumption. He further explained that the more someone consumes political news the more likely it is that his or her political interest will increase or will at least become further reinforced; thus, his or her political participation might be pulled into action when the opportunity arises. Consequently, media can be seen as promoting both political interest and political expression which will eventually lead to political participation.

Using data from cross-national surveys in 18 Latin American countries, Salzman (2015) explored how political news consumption contributes to the political engagement of the citizens in those countries. He found several modes of news consumption, such as television, radio, newspaper and the Internet, to be statistically and positively correlated with the citizens' political participation. Moreover, the use of media for political information-seeking purposes was found to contribute to the four types of political engagement: discussing politics, voting, attending political meetings, and protesting. Therefore, Salzman suggested that news media have a mobilizing power in encouraging people to participate in political processes.

It is also important to understand what media structural factors might also promote audience involvement in the political sphere. Delli Capri et al. (1994) explored

how the availability of political information, such as living in a media-rich environment, contributes to the chance of obtaining adequate information of politics and, thus, encourages the public to participate in political discussions. Their study was conducted in a media-rich environment in northern Virginia, which is relatively close to the Washington, D. C. metropolitan area, where they found that a media environment influenced the likelihood of the citizens being receptive to political news. However, their study also found that the respondents tended to be unaware of local politics rather than national politics since most of the media news was related to the national political sphere and less concerned with local issues. Within this example, the media availability, political news in particular, should also be noted as one issue that needs to be taken into account in the exploration of the media's role in the public's political participation.

***Political participation in a newer media environment.*** Even though some other research findings suggest there is little evidence that media truly influence audiences' political attitudes and behaviors (Iyengar & McGrady, 2007; Nelson, Clawson & Oxley, 1997), it is still difficult to ignore the contribution of media to informed citizens, as required in democracy. Traditional media like newspapers, television, and radio have been said to be important in providing political news to the audience. This assumption is supported by various studies that found the use of traditional media is an important source for political information (Blumler & McQuail, 1969; Gunders, 2012; Hmielowski, Holbert & Lee, 2011). However, due to the one-way communication exhibited by traditional media, Han (2014) argued that the possibility for the audience to be fully engaged with political participation is limited. He emphasized that traditional media

platforms like television and newspapers have been accused of failing to provide an autonomous dialogue among the public to get themselves engaged in the political processes. Rather than allowing the public to participate in the political discourse, the top-down approach to dissemination of political messages has been the main feature of traditional media's role in political communication.

According to Han (2014), the increasing role of newer media platforms that enable two-way communication between the media organization and the audience will provide wider access to the audience, which may eventually lead the audience to participate further in political discourse. He explained that through new media, individuals could also address political issues directly to the government as well as to policy-makers, especially since penetration of the Internet has been increasing in recent times. In the context of American politics, according to Pew Research's latest survey in 2014, there has been a gradual increase in the number of voters who use social media to maintain connections with political figures (Anderson, 2015). Within the same survey, it is also reported that people who connected to politicians online were mainly motivated to obtain current political news. Some of them claimed that this source of information is more reliable than mainstream media organizations, thus bypassing traditional political journalism. Therefore, it is argued that the Internet provides a wider opportunity for the public to engage in political participation compared to traditional media like newspapers (Shah, McLeod & Yoon, 2001).

Barney (2004) argued that advancement of communication technology has always been fundamental to political life. Within this sense, digital communication is considered

essential in the contemporary political sphere, especially in the politics of a networked society, such as in the case of diaspora. Barney further argued that the relationships between communication technologies and networked politics have contributed to the new form of politics as well as challenging the political authority of the nation-state as the primary holder of political power. Previous studies on diaspora and digital politics supported Barney's assumption. For instance, Mandaville (2001) found that the Internet has provided online discussion forums and exchanges of information among the Muslim diaspora in Western countries as their primary mode of political expression. Similarly, Morris (2012) demonstrated that Ivorians outside of Côte d'Ivoire routinely practice cyber-politics by circulating political news about their homeland mainly through the Internet. These studies have demonstrated that the newer communication technologies, such as the Internet and social networking sites, are becoming prevalent among diaspora to connect with their homeland politics.

Various scholars have embraced the growing importance of the Internet, and social media in particular, as newer modes of political participation. Some examined appropriation of these newer media for seeking political news (Kwak, Lee, Park & Moon, 2010), while other scholars found an association between the newer media and the increasing political participation (Gil de Zúñiga, Copeland & Bimber, 2014). Other studies demonstrated that the use of social media goes beyond political information seeking since it also allows media users to be involved in generating users' content as part of the new mode of political participation (Gil de Zúñiga, Molyneux & Zheng, 2014). In this view, social media not only changed the way people consume political

news but also the way media users engage in the political processes. Changes in the media environment, once more, influence the appropriation of media technologies into people's everyday life practices, such as in how people participate in the political sphere.

Appropriation of social media to engage with political matters can be found even in a simple practice like an online political discussion. Gil de Zúñiga, Jung and Valenzuela's (2012) study is one of the examples of research conducted within this issue. Their study found that in addition to social capital, using social networking sites, especially for news-seeking purposes have been attributed to people's social and political participation in both online and offline environments. Their research, in addition to similar studies on this topic, has brought the possibility of optimizing the appropriation of social media to further engage citizens in the political sphere. Moreover, it is also expected that social media will be able to promote people's political participation beyond the online environment, could thus enhance political change in real life rather than being limited to the virtual political sphere. Yet, few studies have paid serious attention to the interplay between online and offline political engagement, especially in the case of the long-distance politics of diaspora.

The growing importance of social media to facilitate political participation, however, should never overshadow traditional media. What has been missing from recent studies on the use of social media as a mode of political engagement are the older media platforms within the discussion. Far from being irrelevant, traditional media have been found to be still important. I argue that to include reappropriation of traditional media like television and print media would be seen as necessary in understanding the changes

of media use within the context of mediatized political participation. By taking structural barriers as well as audience's individual characteristics into account (Cooper & Tang, 2009; Webster, 2009, 2011), the emergence of newer media like the Internet and social media, or even mobile media, should be placed parallel with the existing platforms. Thereby, a more holistic illustration of the nature of multiple media use as a mode of political engagement will be more visible, especially in the transmedia age of today.

This current study emphasizes how transnational people who are considered displaced audiences tend to use transnational (homeland) media, through both traditional and newer media platforms, especially to participate in the political sphere in their respective home countries. Moreover, how people in diaspora use transnational media will be considered a mode of transnational political participation. This means that by using transnational media—transnational people reading online news and watching TV broadcast from their home country media outlets, or even discussing the latest political situations in their homeland through social media—these people are developing their own particular way to be involved in transnational politics.

While most previous studies on transnationalism and media focused on the experience of transnational people with their home country media, only scant attention has been given to how these various modes of media usage can be seen as political participation. Within this assumption, for members of diaspora, transnational media are not only enabling cross nation-borders activity but also are a means of creating opportunities for political participation in their home country's politics while living in a host country. Moreover, this transnational political participation is mainly done through

media. Therefore, media play an increasingly significant role in mediating transnational people's experience of their transnational politics.

Livingstone (2009) argued that media have the ability to mediate everything in our contemporary life. Consequently, transnational people's ability to engage in their home countries' politics should be considered mediated by media. Without media, transnational people will be seen only as displaced persons who moved outside their homeland without the ability to maintain connections with people living in their homeland or to participate in their homeland's politics. Thus, as argued by Bernal (2006), media have become a preexisting condition for transnational people to conduct transnational activity, such as long-distance politics. However, there is still a need for empirical exploration not only of how, but also of why transnational people decide to use media to maintain connections with the political sphere in their countries of origin. Since previous research on diaspora's long-distance political participation tends to ignore the complex relationship between media factors and non-media diasporic conditions, the purpose of this study is to fill this theoretical gap within the literature of media, diaspora, and transnational politics. This current study also aims to explore the Indonesian diaspora's motivations, their preferences in terms of media use of both traditional and newer media platforms, as their mode of maintaining connections with the Indonesian political sphere, as well as factors that may encourage or discourage their mediatized long-distance engagement of homeland politics.

Based on these theoretical considerations, this current study proposes the following research questions:

RQ1: How, and to what extent, does the Indonesian diaspora in the US use media to participate in the political sphere of their home country?

RQ2: What are the motivations of the Indonesian diaspora in the United States for using media as their means of transnational political participation with the Indonesian political sphere?

RQ3: With the availability of newer media technologies, mainly the Internet and social media, what are the media preferences of the Indonesian diaspora in the US as they use media as their mode of transnational political participation with Indonesian politics?

RQ4: What are the factors, in both media and non-media dimensions, that may determine the level of engagement of the Indonesian diaspora in their homeland politics through the use of media in electoral as well as non-electoral political participation?

### **Mediatization Theory and Political Sphere**

**Conceptualizing mediatization.** In this section, I will discuss the mediatization theory and how it is seen as appropriate use as a theoretical framework to explain how transnational Indonesians experience their transnational political participation through media. Considered by Madianou (2014) as, “one of the most exciting and promising intellectual developments in media and communications research in recent years” (p. 328), in its general term, mediatization theory refers to a meta-process that describes the increasing role of media, both as technology and for organization, in mediating and shaping our everyday practice as well as our social relations (Livingstone, 2009). While this definition outlines the importance of media in mediating most of our everyday experience, Livingstone argued that media do not simply mediate in the sense of ‘getting



in between' but should be seen beyond that sense. She further argued that while the media mediate everything, at the same time they enter and shape relationships among individuals and society, and thus, "the media mediate more than ever before" (Livingstone, 2009, p. xi). Additionally, Lundby (2009) argued that the term *mediation* is too broad, thus he proposes mediatization, which he regards as more specific to the transformations in society and everyday life that are shaped by modern media and the process of mediated communication. Jansson (2013) also explained mediatization as, "how other social processes in a broad variety of domains and at different levels become inseparable from and dependent on technological processes and resources of mediation" (p. 281). Indeed, mediatization theory is thought to promote the supremacy of media over other institutions and processes in our everyday lives, such as social, religion, and politics.

Hjarvard (2008a) suggested that mediation should be differentiated from mediatization, especially when he considered that mediation refers only to communication through one or more media with the influence limited only to both senders and receivers without any further profound implication on social institutions such as politics and religion. In addition, he explained that mediatization is an ongoing process of how the growing significance of media is changing social institutions as well as their modes of interaction. Hjarvard (2008a) further explained, "by the mediatization of society, we understand the process whereby society to an increasing degree is submitted to, or becomes dependent on, the media and their logic" (p. 113). Therefore, mediatization of society can be defined as a theoretical concept that, "indicates the

extension of the influence of the media (considered both as cultural technology and as an organization) into all spheres of society and social life” (Mazzoleni, 2008a, para. 1).

Moreover, Hjarvard (2008a) characterized mediatization by its duality: interdependent and independent at the same time. On one hand, media intrusion to other social fields has made media an integrated and integral part of these other fields. On the other hand, media became an independent institution that operates with its own logic, as well as gains its own status as a social institution with its own characteristics. As a result, media turned to be the center of other social institutions to interact, within and between, institutions as well as in society in general. In the case of mediatization of religion, Hjarvard (2008b) explained that media highly contribute to social and cultural changes in the way religious messages are transmitted, disseminated, and exchanged within society, including how religion is being represented. As a consequence, institutionalized religious authorities are being challenged or even replaced by the media. He called this process the mediatization of religion.

The mediatization process can also be divided into two categories: direct (strong) and indirect (weak) mediatization (Hjarvard, 2004). In direct mediatization, media converts non-mediated activities into a mediated form, as is the case with online banking. Meanwhile, in indirect mediatization, media use their symbolic power and mechanism to create a constructed reality. For example, people who buy hamburgers may not be driven by hunger but are influenced by symbolic messages created by the media that have constructed their social and cultural realities. Thus, children who want to go to McDonald’s might be influenced by cartoons rather than simply by wanting to eat

burgers. The problem is, sometimes direct and indirect mediatizations are intertwined, thus making them less obvious to be differentiated (Hepp, 2013).

Hepp (2013) also distinguished two aspects of mediatization—quantitative and qualitative aspects. The quantitative feature of mediatization is highlighted in the use of word *more* when we talk about the increasing availability of media in our daily lives. In addition, the abundant media that are available to us need multiple ways of appropriation. Krotz (2007, quoted in Hepp, 2013) explained how the dispersion of media could be associated with three main issues: time, space, and social dimensions. In terms of *time dimension*, media have become mostly available at most times. In the case of television, most of the national television channels now available 24 hours per day. The Indonesian diaspora in the US, for example, can watch American television programs but they can, at the same time, also watch Indonesian television channels, which broadcast ‘from the future’ (since Indonesian time precedes US time). This allows these diasporic audiences to access television content that goes beyond a single media system as well as the conventional time limit.

The use of smart phones to access online media is another example of how people can access media anytime they want and challenges the notion of *space dimension* in accessing media (Berry & Hamilton, 2010). Nowadays, space does not really limit where most people can access media since through newer media platforms like the mobile phone, they can relatively easily use media anywhere they want, which would not have been possible 40 years ago. Meanwhile, *social dimension* of mediatization refers to the notion that there is an increasing phenomenon whereby social relationships and

institutions are mediated by the media. For instance, computer use is no longer strictly associated with work as in the past (Hepp, 2013). Similarly, a 'friend list' is now primarily associated with the friend list on social media like Facebook.

Meanwhile, Hepp (2013) explained that the qualitative aspect of mediatization refers to the reciprocity of media technology and how people communicate. When he discussed this qualitative aspect of mediatization, Hepp referred to the idea of the molding forces of media, which he described as the way that media have put certain 'pressures' on how we communicate. On one hand, the use of the smart phone has enabled someone to stay connected to other people on his or her contact lists even though that person is mobile. On the other hand, smart phone users feel more pressured by their mobile phones to stay connected to other people. Rejecting the assumption of technological determinism of the medium theory, Hepp argued that the very basic idea of the molding forces of media relies on how media technology requires distinctive appropriation; thus, it goes beyond the classical notion of media use. Media appropriation should be seen as an interwoven action with other (communicative) practices. For instance, we listen to the radio while driving a car; or scroll our smart phone screen while watching a boring television program. Consequently, understanding the context of media use, or media appropriation in Hepp's words, requires a closer examination of the context of media use as well as the technological features of a particular medium.

While mediatization often refers to changes associated with communication media and their development, Schulz (2004) further categorized four types of processes whereby the media play a key role. These processes are extension; substitution;

amalgamation; and accommodation. First, media became an extension of human communication, thus helping people deal with previous obstacles of human communication such as time, space, and expressive barriers. Schulz (2004) borrows McLuhan's (1964) medium theory, which emphasizes the notion of media as an 'extension of man' Within this sense, Hepp (2013) said of mediatization, "the possibilities of human communicative action has increased with the passage of time" (p. 40). Second, media partially or wholly substituted for or replaced social institutions or activities as well as changing their characteristics. For example, communicating through email substitutes for letters or direct conversation. Third, amalgamation describes the conditions where mediated activities are merging with non-media activities.

Consequently, the boundaries between mediated and non-media activities are getting smaller. When media use becomes essential and integrated with our daily life, media reality amalgamates with social reality. Hepp (2013) used the example of how a non-mediated activity intertwines with a media practice, such driving a car and listening to the radio at the same time, to illustrate this amalgamation phase. Fourth, as various actors or social institutions, such as politics, sports, entertainment, etc. are becoming dependent on the media, they also tend to accommodate to how the media operate, in exchange to the autonomy of these actors/institutions. In other words, other sectors of our social lives are becoming oriented toward media logic (Hepp, 2013; Schulz, 2004). The problem is, more published papers have focused on the debates of mediatization as concepts (Krotz, 2009; Lundby, 2009), rather than providing an empirical examination of the phenomenon in various everyday life dimensions, such as social, cultural, religion, and politics. As a

result, Krotz and Hepp (2011) suggested further study to empirically investigate the practice of mediatization in a real-life context.

**Mediatization of politics.** There is an increasing trend toward mediatization research among various scholars from different disciplines. This is happening because mediatization theory is argued as a powerful instrument to explain the centrality of the media in daily life, yet lack of support in terms of empirical investigation. Couldry (2008) explained that the term *mediatization* can be used to characterize the transformation of society mainly through something called media logic. He further explained that mediatization came from the idea of the increasing importance of media in our everyday experiences. While studies of mediatization emphasize the key role of media in mediatizing various aspects of everyday life varied from human relationships (Linke, 2011), religion (Hjarvard, 2008b; Setianto, 2015; Uitermark & Gielen, 2010), cultures (Encheva, Drissens, & Verstraten, 2013), and knowledge (Rawole & Lingard, 2010), several scholars argued that mediatization of politics is one of the most salient examples of how our experience of political life is getting more mediatized (Michailidou & Trenz, 2010; Uitermark, & Gielen, 2010). Nevertheless, not much mediatization research has been devoted to the transnational political participation of diaspora.

In explaining about the relationship between the political system and the media system, Oniszczyk (2011) argued that both perform a reciprocal interaction but with various degrees. When the interaction is seen to be equal and balanced, the relationship becomes symbiotic. However, when the political system is considered stronger than the media system, what happens is politicization of media. Political power controls media

practice, as in the case where an authoritarian government censors the media content in that particular country. In contrast, where media are seen as having a powerful influence over political processes, it can be argued that the mediatization of politics has been materialized.

Mazzoleni (2008b) illustrated mediatization of politics as a complex process associated with, “the presence of media logic in society and in the political sphere” (para. 1). Similarly, Mazzoleni and Schultz (1999) examined the concept of mediatization in the context of media’s intrusion into politics. When taking examples from how political leaders use media to demonstrate their political power, Mazzoleni and Schulz argued that in these cases of mediatized politics, media are becoming the center, while politics is losing its autonomy since it is becoming more dependent on the media. This theory does not suggest the media entirely diminish the power of political institutions, such as parliamentary and political parties, but their dependency on media has forced them to adapt to the media logic. Media logic itself, according to Hjarvard (2008a), can be seen as the media’s modus operandi both in institutional and in technological aspects that cover how the media operate with their own set of rules in disseminating information and any other material and symbolic resources.

Strömbäck (2008) argued that the influence of media in the political sphere has been studied by various scholars, thus, it has been supported by various media theory, such as agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) and media framing (Entman, 1993). However, he rejected the notion of media effects that put too much emphasis on the casual logic of media’s influence on an individual’s perception of the political sphere.

Consequently, Strömbäck considered media effect theories have failed to, “appreciate the interactions, interdependencies, and transactions at a system level and with regards to how media shape and reshape politics, culture and people’s sense making” (2008, p. 232). Within this sense, the importance of media effects theories are seen as inadequate to interpret the complex relationship between media scape and political sphere in today’s age of media hegemony. Therefore, scholars proposed to apply mediatization to discuss the growing importance of media in the political scape (Block, 2013; Marcinkowski, 2014; Schulz, 2004).

Strömbäck (2008) also illustrated four dimensions of the mediatization of politics. First, the degree to which media have become the most important source, for both the political institutions and the public to obtain political information, is seen as one key figure of mediatization of politics. Where politicians rely much more on their personal experience, or at least on personal communication to obtain information for their politics-related decision-making, it can be argued that mediatization of politics is minimal. Second, the degree of media’s independency toward the political sphere, which can be associated with several factors, such as journalists’ professionalism and commercialization of journalism, is seen as another dimension of mediatization of politics. The third and fourth dimensions are more related to how much media content, as well as politicians, is governed by media. Nowadays, politicians are really concerned with how media present their images to the public since it may influence the voters’ decision whether to support them in upcoming elections. Similarly, the more media content portrays a particular presidential candidate negatively, for example, the higher the



chance that people will be reluctant to vote for that candidate, especially if media publish a report scandal or corruption concerning that candidate just before the election.

Unfortunately, Strömbäck did not specify whether these mediatization dimensions could be explicated into a more complex mediatized political experience, as in the case of long-distance political engagement of the members of diaspora.

Strömbäck's (2008) conceptualization of the four dimensions of mediatization of politics is also associated with Cook's (2005) argument that it is not politicians who control the media since what truly happens is media get the upper hand over politicians. Cook further argued, "politicians may then win the daily battles with the news media, by getting into the news as they wish, but end up with losing the war, as standards of newsworthiness begin to become prime criteria to evaluate issues, policies, and politics" (p. 168). This argument further illustrates the displacement of political logic with media logic. Moreover, there is a tendency for political actors to give more attention to media practices, thus turning the political logic into the media logic. Strömbäck and Esser (2009) took the example of the televised political debate of the 2008 US presidential election and discussed how politics became mediatized, where media play a more significant role in mediating politics. People are becoming dependent upon media for information about politics, and political actors are increasingly dependent upon media to disseminate their political arguments as well as to seek out people's opinions. Based on these findings, the authors argued that media logic overlaps political logic. Similarly, Driessens, Raeymaeckers, Verstraten and Vandebussche (2010) showed that the processes of mediatization of politics were evident within politicians' media-related

practices since these politicians were becoming dependent upon media to broadcast their political ideas to the public.

While these previous studies focused more on mediatized political activity from political actors' point of view, Driessens et al. (2010) also suggested exploring people's practices which are considered more useful in explaining mediatization rather than to solely rely on media logic or media text. For example, how the mediatization process happens within society, such as mediatized experience of citizens' participation in politics, can be seen as a potential domain of mediatization of politics that can be explored. Therefore, a study of mediatization of political participation, which emphasizes citizens' political activities through the media is considered highly significant. In addition, as pointed out by Esser and Matthes (2013), it is important to take a closer look at citizens' civic attitude toward mediatized politics since the relationship between citizens and media in the circulation of information about politics and other policy-making processes are fundamental elements in the process of democracy.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is not only to fill this theoretical gap but also to expand the current literature on transnational politics and media by using the case of mediatized experience of the Indonesian diaspora's long-distance politics as the main locus of the study. Reviews of the literature on diaspora, transnational politics and mediatization of politics within this chapter were utilized to develop the theoretical framework of this research.

On the basis of the previous studies of mediatization, the following research question is also presented:

RQ5: To what extent have the mediatization processes, or (a) social-cultural changes, as well as (b) changes in the media environment, influenced how the Indonesian diaspora in the US experienced their homeland's politics?

### **Why Study the Indonesian Diaspora's Transnational Politics?**

The Indonesian political sphere provides an intriguing case for the democratization process in a developing country with the focus on the relationships between the political system, the media and public participation. Previously, there have been various studies on Indonesian politics. These studies mainly examined the political system under the authoritarian regime of President Suharto (Aspinall, 2005; Jenkins, 2010; Liddle, 1996), with some of them emphasizing the role of the media in Indonesian politics (Kitley, 2000; McDaniel, 2002; Sen & Hill, 2000). The importance of Indonesian politics on a global scale became prominent after the collapse of Suharto's regime in 1998 and has turned this country into the third largest democratic country in the world after India and the US (Shekhar, 2015). Afterwards, the democratization process of the Indonesian political sphere was exhibited at least in practice in free and fair national and regional elections as well as freedom of the press (Rieffel, 2010).

Experiencing dramatic change in its political sphere in the past few decades, moving from an authoritarian state to a more democratic nation, the contemporary Indonesian political system is still considered by Fealy (2013) as a site for constant struggle between the people who support political reform and those who want to halt or even reverse the democratization process. This has been the primary attention of scholars since they investigated dynamic changes of Indonesian political landscape in the post-

Suharto era (e.g., Aspinall, 2010; Kusno, 2013; McRae, 2013; Mietzner, 2013; Okamoto & Honna, 2014) and they hoped that the practice of democratization in this country could be used as an example for the process of democracy in other countries. Shekhar (2015) outlined what he argued was one of the reasons why democratization and political development in Indonesia should be considered important in the context of global politics:

Indonesia's democratic experience has been viewed not only as a case of celebration and an important reference point in the history of the global growth of democracy, but also as a standard case for observation, examination and emulation for the developing, Muslim and multi-ethnic societies, including the countries of West Asia and North Africa. Such countries have experienced sudden stimuli for change and democratization in the aftermath of the Spring revolution, which witnessed massive popular mobilization for the topple of the autocratic and military regimes. A few writings equated the Arab Spring with the Indonesian *Reformasi* and suggested lessons from the former to learn from the latter. (p. 101)

While studies of Indonesian politics have been commonly been conducted in Indonesia, only a few research projects have been done outside the national borders, such as the Indonesian diaspora's transnational political participation in the homeland's politics (Missbach, 2012). This current study aims to contribute to the theory-building of Indonesian politics outside the archipelago with the Indonesian diaspora as the context of the study. The focus is on one specific transnational community—the Indonesian diaspora in the US—and how they use media to participate in their homeland political

sphere; a topic that unfortunately is has been neglected by previous research on both Indonesian and transnational politics.

Compared to other diasporic groups, the Indonesian diaspora are seen as unique in terms of their long-distance political participation in the home country's politics, in addition to their long history of transnational political activism, which I discussed in Chapter II of this dissertation. During the authoritarian period, overseas Indonesians, mainly political exiles, were active in putting political pressure on the homeland government, with some of them using media to circulate the political messages. For instance, GAM (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*, the Free Aceh Movement) was said to be one of the first separatist movements in the world to optimize mobile media and the Internet to connect their diasporic members with their fellow paramilitary members in the homeland to influence the political condition of their country of origin (Missbach, 2012). Indonesian students abroad were also credited with using online mailing lists, most notably *Apakabar*, to disseminate political information from the diaspora to the home country, joined by 250,000 members from 92 different countries (MacDougall, n.d.), which eventually led to the dismissal of Suharto from the presidential seat in 1998. Political participation of the Indonesian diaspora has been increasing in the post-authoritarian era; thus, it provides a wider opportunity for political engagement of nationals abroad in homeland politics.

Transnational political participation of the Indonesian diaspora is diverse, yet parallel to other long-distance politics exhibited by various diasporic groups. On one hand, Indonesian political exiles, such as GAM members, can be considered as 'conflict-

generated diaspora' (Lyons, 2007); thus, their political participation was associated with the conflict situated in the country of origin. This is also commonly found in diaspora who came from conflict-related countries, such as Ethiopians in North America (Lyons, 2006). On the other hand, in the post-conflict periods, the Indonesian diaspora's political participation was more related to engagement in the home country's political processes, such as casting votes in the national elections as well as everyday life politics (Berger, 2014). This follows the trend of transnational political engagement of diaspora from various countries in their homeland political issues (Bermúdez, Escriva & Mena, 2014). Moreover, the study of transnational political networks of Indonesians overseas is argued by Hill and Dragojlovic (2010) as important in understanding how these displaced nationals could exemplify, "the potential to establish affiliations that figure as alternatives to the legal and cultural belonging to the nation state" (p. 1), which eventually, "proves productive ground for a critical interrogation of related topics and theoretical debates such as diaspora and trans-national studies, and borderland identities" (p. 6). The present study aims to attest Hill and Dragojlovic's assumption by taking the case of how contemporary transnational political networks of the Indonesian diaspora in the US develop through their mediatized experiences of their homeland politics as the core of the study.

In terms of the role of media in enabling long-distance political participation, even though Indonesians overseas do not enjoy the privileged position of having abundant ethnic media in diaspora as Latin Americans do in the US for example, the Indonesian diaspora developed their unique ways to access media content from the

country of origin, mainly to engage in contemporary discourse of their homeland politics. Separated by physical distance, the Indonesian diaspora in the US (the second largest democratic country in the world) could optimize polymedia use, enabled by the presence of various advanced media technologies in the host country, to maintain their long-distance connections with the political sphere in Indonesia (the world's third largest democratic nation). Despite the increasing importance of (even dependency upon) media for the Indonesian diaspora to experience their long-distance politics of the homeland, how the mediatization process occurred within this transnational community has never been investigated by previous studies on mediatization of politics. This current study is one of the first attempts to empirically examine the mediatization experience of the members of the Indonesian diaspora in the US and their transnational-homeland politics. Moreover, this study aims to expand the theoretical building of mediatization of politics theory by taking the case of the Indonesian diaspora's long-distance politics as its focus.

### **Summary**

Within this chapter, I have discussed the existing literature on diaspora and transnationalism as well as political participation and explored their connections with media scholarship. In the first section, I outlined current debates on the appropriation of the concept of diaspora and how this term has been challenged by the growing complexity of international migration. Moreover, how diaspora and transnationalism are intertwined, and even sometimes complement each other, has been discussed in the subsequent section. While both concepts refer to the basic assumption of the relationship between people who dispersed from their country of origin and how they aim to preserve

their sense of belongingness with the homeland, not all diaspora automatically performed transnational practices. Additionally, the discussion is also being placed in the context of the use of media as one prominent feature of transnational engagement. This is particularly the case of how the Indonesian diaspora in the US optimize their media use to be engaged with contemporary events in the homeland.

In the subsequent section, I have outlined the current debates on mediatization theory and how contemporary literature on media and politics found this particular theory to be challenging. First, I discussed the complexity of the conceptualization of mediatization with an additional explanation of how the role of media in contemporary society, especially in the Western countries, has gone beyond the mediation function: mediating between media organization (sender) and the public (receiver). Rejecting the linearity of media effects theories, mediatization aims to understand how changes in socio-cultural environments, as well as the media environment, have contributed to the media supremacy over other fields, especially politics. Within the mediatization theory, media have gradually replaced political logic with media logic, thus influencing how people understand contemporary political institutions and processes (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014). Applying these theoretical frameworks, this study aims to further explore how mediatization processes occur in the case of transnational political participation of diasporic communities like the Indonesian diaspora in Washington, D. C. and the Los Angeles metropolitan areas.



## **Chapter IV: Media Ethnography in a Multi-Sited Setting: Methodological Issues in Researching Indonesian Diaspora in the United States**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the main goal of this dissertation project is to understand the complexity of mediatization of transnational-homeland political practice exhibited by the Indonesian diaspora in the US, especially through their appropriation of media in an everyday life context. In doing so, it is important to develop a methodological framework that will enable the researcher to further comprehend the intricacies of this media-enforced transnational phenomenon. Ethnography, as widely used not only in the field of anthropology but also in media studies, mainly to examine the practice of media consumption (Pasquier, Buzzi, d’Haenens & Sjöberg, 1998; Tufte, 2000), offers a distinctive advantage in the exploration of diaspora. As explained by Georgiou (2006), “ethnography, in its methodological openness, records and reflects on the diversity and the interconnectedness of the multiple spaces where the diasporic everyday expands” (p. 37). This research method, she further explained, provides an opportunity for a researcher to utilize various strategies of data collection, from analyzing visual materials to casual conversations. This will help us to better understand not only the setting of the research but also the subjects of the study.

Even though ethnographic research traditionally focuses on one specific location, which allows an in-depth immersion of the ethnographer in the field, I am following the line of argument of multi-sited ethnographers who applied ethnographic fieldwork in multiple sites (Georgiou, 2006; Missbach, 2012). This approach, as practiced by these scholars, encourages an ethnographer to move between places, or at least to focus more

on multiple locations, in order to examine transnational practices where specific observation of one fieldwork site is seen as inadequate. Moreover, this ethnographic strategy is also considered as beneficial in the exploration of the increasing complexity of media use in today's era of polymedia (Madianou & Miller, 2012).

Within this chapter, I will further discuss the appropriation of ethnography in this dissertation project. The first section is allocated to briefly explaining the adaptation of an ethnographic approach to media studies, also referred as media ethnography. This section will be followed by a discussion about multi-sited ethnography, including both advantages and disadvantages, and how this approach is suitable for this current research of diaspora use of media for long-distance participation in their homeland politics. In the subsequent section, the debates surrounding native ethnography, and how they might influence the nature of this study will also be provided. Moreover, as part of self-reflexivity, as an Indonesian living in the US and conducting research about the Indonesian diaspora in America, I think it is highly important for me to disclose my biographical characteristics in relation to the conversation about native ethnography. This issue is also included in the final section of this chapter where I will share my experience of conducting the fieldwork, which also encompasses some limitations of this media ethnographic research.

### **Media Ethnography as Research Method**

While in anthropological tradition ethnography is used to study cultures, media scholars tend to use it to explore one prominent aspect of media, which is media consumption (Georgiou, 2006; Seiter, 1999). As further explained by Georgiou (2006),

the main intention of media scholars in using ethnography is beyond empirical exploration outside the laboratory, and more about creating, “a framework for studying media consumption as a cultural activity, inseparable from all the cultural practices and practices shaping and being shaped in the natural everyday setting and the broader social, spatial and temporal context” (p. 36). Similarly, Gillespie (1995) emphasized the appropriation of media ethnography to study about audience, where she argued that this method, “can deliver empirically grounded knowledge of media audiences in a way that other, less socially encompassing methods cannot” (p. 54). Moreover, Bird (2003) explained that media ethnography can be helpful for researchers to, “answer questions about what people really do with the media, rather than what we imagine they might do” (p. 191). By identifying the advantages of media ethnography, as discussed above, it is also worth mentioning why media ethnography should be seen as an appropriate tool to examine the practice of media use for transnational political participation in diaspora.

Drotner (2000) provided three main reasons why media scholars employ distinct ways of using ethnography to study media practices. First, many researchers in media studies use a particular social group’s activities surrounding the media rather than using one specific medium as their starting point of the research. This would lead to the exploration of cultures practiced by the social group being studied, rather than simply studying the media being used. Second, to some extent, informants in media ethnography cannot simply be categorized as audiences or media users since they might also become producers of some communication practices. In this way, research participants should not always be considered as passive media consumers since they could also be seen at the

same time as active participants, and even producers, for being involved in media or communicative practices. Third, it is most likely that media ethnography will require multi-sited fieldwork. Since people are using media in more than a single location, it would make more sense for media ethnographers to focus the study on multiple places. Accordingly, various scholars utilized ‘newer’ ethnographic approaches to cope with the multi-sited nature of the media environment, such as using multi-sited ethnography, mobile ethnography and even online or virtual ethnography (boyd, 2008; Hannerz, 1996; Hine, 2001). In this current study, appropriation of the newer ethnographic approach, multi-sited ethnography in particular, will be beneficial in examining the increasing complexity of the practice of media consumption for long-distance political practices exhibited by people in diaspora. In the following section, I will further exemplify how multi-sited media ethnography has been widely used to study the influence of globalization on the practice of media use.

### **Multi-sited Approach for Studying Transnationalism**

This study employs a qualitative approach with multi-sited ethnography as the main research method. The use of multi-sited ethnography is important in order to capture, “cross-border interconnections” (Tsuda, Tapias & Escandell, 2014, p. 123), as well as to better illustrate the complexity of the, “deterritorialized world of transnational flows” (Appadurai, quoted from Tsuda et al., 2014, p. 124). Similarly, Marcus (1995) also encouraged ethnographers to move beyond a single site to observe the flows and movements of, “cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space” (p. 96). He further argued that this methodological approach would benefit researchers in their

attempt to examine the course or path of cultural formations that span different locales or multiple venues.

Ethnography is traditionally associated with an in-depth study of one particular site, focusing on micro-social phenomena, which requires long-term engagement of the ethnographer with the subjects of the study (Tsuda et al., 2014). This approach was seen as insufficient to explore the influence of globalization, global media in particular, on society (Appadurai, 1996). For this reason, a multi-sited ethnographic approach is considered by various scholars to be beneficial to examine such global influences on our contemporary lives, especially in studying transnational phenomena (Hannerz, 2003; Stoller, 1997; Tsuda et al., 2014). Therefore, it can be understood why multi-sited ethnography is commonly used by anthropologists focusing on global phenomena.

Tsuda et al. (2014) also discussed three major reasons why multi-sited ethnography is preferred by contemporary global anthropologists. First, it can be used for *making comparisons* of the influence of global processes that take place in different or numerous localities, including the exploration both of similarities and of differences of the impact resulting from the global processes. They mentioned Michael Goldman's (2005) study of the transnational impact of the World Bank's global policy on multiple locales in different countries and how the World Bank's hegemonic power was being criticized by many community activists. I found that this multi-sited approach for making comparison between locales matches the purpose of this research, employing multi-sited ethnography to understand the complexity of transnational practice of long-distance politics, which mainly revolved around the media practice demonstrated by members of

diaspora. Second, global anthropologists used a multi-sited approach *to follow movement and flow*, either of commodities or cultures. Scheper-Hughes' (2002) research on the practice of globaltrafficking human organs was mentioned as an example of a multi-sited approach within this category. Similarly, David Edwards' (1994) study of a group of *mujahidin* from Afghanistan also exemplified multi-sited ethnography and media studies when he followed his informants from Paktia and Peshawar in Afghanistan to Georgetown in Washington, D. C. as well as online on the Internet. Third, it is common to find the use of multi-sited fieldwork in the exploration of transnational *connections* between multiple places and communities. Ulf Hannerz's (2004, 2007) studies on foreign correspondents in various countries were referred to by Tsuda et al. (2014) as the primary examples of using a multi-sited approach to understand such complex transnational connections.

Previously, Robben (2007) argued that multi-sited ethnography is not simply a method synonymous with an ethnographic study with multiple sites. He explained that classical anthropological research has long utilized the latter approach, such as Margaret Mead's (1935) research on sexuality in three different tribes and Robert Redfield's (1941) study of interactions between urban and rural populations in Mexico. However, these two examples, as argued by Robben, did not resonate with the multi-sited ethnographic approach, which has more emphasis on, "multiple connections rather than multiple sites" (p. 331). Moreover, Marcus (1995) also argued that:

Multi-sited is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtaposition of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of

literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument about ethnography. (p. 105)

Therefore, in making the selection of more than a single location as the focus of the study, a multi-sited ethnographer should at least define his or her study based upon an exploration of interconnectivity within the sites being studied. Moreover, Falzon (2012) argued that multi-sited ethnography should not be limited to the dispersion of the field being studied into multiple physical sites. He further explained that, “multi-sitedness actually means not just sites, but spatialized (cultural) difference – it is not important how many and how distant sites are, what matters is that they are different” (p. 13).

There is no singularity in terms of strategy to be used for conducting a multi-sited ethnography since scholars have demonstrated several variations in applying this method. Marcus (1995), for example, mentioned that there are six different strategies of a multi-sited approach. First, *following the people*, which refers to the movement of an ethnographer to multiple sites to follow and stay with people being studied. Marcus mentioned Malinowski's (1961) study of Trobrianders as one classical example of this approach. He also stated that this approach has recently become a common feature of research on migration, mainly when ethnographers follow subjects of the study in crossing nation-state borders. Second, *following the thing*, which is more associated with how ethnographers are moving between places to stay close to particular objects or commodities, which vary from money to intellectual property. Third, *following the metaphor*, which refers to the idea that ethnographers are following a particular

discourse, or sign or symbol, rather than a concrete object. For instance, Martin's (1994) study of immunity systems in the American society had encouraged her to follow the course of various diseases, such as heart disease, polio, and AIDS. This dissertation is more associated with this strategy where the researcher aims to follow a particular discourse of the practice of mediatization of transnational-homeland participation of exhibited by members of Indonesian diaspora in two metropolitan areas, Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles. Even though their mediatized long-distanced political participations are observable, I argue that how these people are engaged in transnational political activism should be regarded as a discourse rather than a 'concrete object.' Fourth, *following the plot, story, or allegory*, which is related to how multi-sited ethnography is being used to track down particular narratives or stories. Marcus also mentioned that this approach was commonly used to study social memory. One of the examples is Berg's (2011) study of the struggle of members of the Cuban diaspora in Spain in preserving their collective memory about their homeland, especially when the generational issue was highlighted in her study. Fifth, *following the life or biography*, which is widely known as the life history approach. Marcus claimed that this method of following an individual's life or biography was mostly used to complement a multi-sited ethnography rather than a stand-alone project. Thus, a multi-sited strategy, such as following the plot, could take advantage of using life histories to provide a much more nuanced overview of one sociocultural phenomenon by adding an individual's point of view. Lastly, *following the conflict*, which refers to the idea that in conducting multi-sited fieldwork an ethnographer could trace people who were involved in the conflict, or even following both the cause



and the result of the conflict. One of the most intriguing examples I found of this model was Missbach's (2012) multi-sited fieldwork of GAM's (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*, the Free Aceh Movement) long-distance politics, where she not only conducted research of this separatist movement in the homeland in Aceh, but also traced GAM's political leaders in exile—who were found as the primary long-distance commanders of the GAM's military actions in the home country.

Despite its advantages in the exploration of transnational practices, multi-sited ethnography also inherited some limitations. Falzon (2012) outlined several issues concerning scholars' criticism of the use of multi-sited strategy in conducting ethnographic fieldwork. One of the most important criticisms mentioned by Falzon is the issue of depth/thickness of the research. Conventional ethnography aimed for a thick description to obtain the depth of the subjects being studied, whereas ethnographers are often required to spend several months in one particular field. This would be an issue for multi-sited ethnographers who might find it difficult to allocate a huge amount of time in one single place since they have to move between places. As a consequence, a multi-sited ethnography might ignore the 'thickness' of the study and focus more on providing shallow observations of more than a singular site. Nevertheless, Falzon insisted that, "understanding the shallow may itself be a form of depth" (p. 9). Apparently, this was the price that needs to be paid by multi-sited ethnographers, even though not all ethnographic fieldwork that applies multi-sited strategy lacks importance, mainly since the study may still offer a broad and nuanced illustration of the subjects or phenomena being studied.

Falzon (2012) also warned scholars who use the multi-sited method to be cautious in deciding whether to expand the study to more than a single location. He further explained that sometimes ethnographers apologized by saying that the multi-sited approach used in their study was not an intentional decision but more a result of the process of data collection, especially those who eventually thought that conducting the fieldwork in one site was inadequate only after they had started it. This line of thinking, as argued by Falzon, implies a false mindset that aims for holistic and comprehensive ethnographic knowledge. Rather, contextualization is more important to be obtained in conducting any ethnographic fieldwork, including in a multi-sited approach.

As to the limitations of multi-sited ethnography, Tsuda et al. (2014) warned us to be aware that this methodological strategy is, “logistically more difficult and time consuming” (p. 126), and these issues were considered as major drawbacks for many ethnographic studies that used a multi-sited research approach. Indeed, these were also my main concerns when I was researching this dissertation using multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork. Having only ten months for fieldwork, I had a struggle to allocate sufficient time for studying each of my two sites –Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles metropolitan areas. For example, when I spent more time doing participant-observations and in-depth interviews at one site than at the other, it was mainly caused by some logistic barriers, such as availability of funding. However, due to the increasing availability of advanced communication technologies, I could minimize some limitations concerning the irregular or infrequent contact with my informants. I maintained long-distance or mediated communication with my informants, such as using mobile phones,

online chats, or social media, to complement our limited face-to-face interaction time during fieldwork. This research strategy was commonly used by previous multi-sited ethnographers (e.g., Edwards, 1994; Hannerz, 2004). It was considered an advantage in Missbach's (2012) multi-sited study of long-distance politics of the Acehnese diaspora as she explained that, "once face-to-face meetings had taken place, I tried to revisit selected informants and I kept contact by phone and email. Modern telecommunication was a helpful way of maintaining contact after having moved onto a new field site" (p. 22). Indeed, conducting 'mediated' fieldwork was not always beneficial. While this approach might help me to reduce the time spent on the 'actual' fieldwork, I found that by relying too much on this approach might lead me to missing out nonverbal communication as well as some other sensory cues—which could not always be observed in a mediated environment. Therefore, to some extent, I preferred to place this methodological approach as complimentary to my involvement in the actual physical fieldwork, especially during the times when I was participating with various Indonesian diaspora's community activities.

### **Insider-Outsider: The Problem with Native Ethnography**

Ethnography has been considered by Clifford (1988) as an effective research tool, especially in the way it offers, "the way that diverse experiences and facts are selected, gathered, detached from original temporal occasions, and given enduring value in a new arrangement" (p. 231). Following this line of argument, ethnography should be understood as a means of constructing a partial knowledge about one particular moment or cultural practice, which is mainly based upon the ethnographer's selections of

experiences and facts. In doing so, the ethnographer's intention is never to provide a full or holistic illustration of a reality, since it will always be merely a partial reality, a product of a long process of selections made during the course of the study. As for Rabinow (1970), ethnography is mostly derived from an intersubjectivity construction of one particular reality, which involved two parties, the researcher(s) and those who were being studied, informants, or interlocutors. Therefore, in terms of media ethnography, especially in the case of ethnographic study of media use as presented by this current study, the ethnographer and media audiences both were involved in the constructing the 'reality' presented in the study. The question is, what if both ethnographer and informants are coming or sharing the same culture, as in the case of native ethnography?

The issue of native ethnography has long been debated by anthropologists. Most of the criticism has been directed toward the issue of positionality of the ethnographer as a native or indigenous person who studies his or her own culture or society (Kempny, 2012). Previously, Clifford (1986) had noted that, "the 'indigenous ethnographers' ... insiders studying their own cultures offer new angles of vision and depths of understanding. Their accounts are empowered and restricted in unique ways" (p. 6). This is why rather than focusing on criticism of native ethnography, it is more important to find what kinds of advantages can be offered by ethnographers through native ethnography; where, as Clifford mentioned, this ethnographic approach may provide a unique and nuanced insight and understanding since the researcher has been familiar with the culture being studied, regardless of its limitations.

Historically, a native ethnographic approach had been used (even though not as widely) by anthropologists prior to the 1960s, and its appropriation increased following this period when various scholars not only in the Western world but also in developing countries began to embrace this method to explore their very own cultures (Altorki & Fawzi El-Solh, 1988; Messerschmidt, 1981a). Even though scholars referred to different terms while applying native ethnography to their study, Messerschmidt (1981b) preferred the term *native ethnography*. He further explained, “I see a slight tendency for North American anthropologists at home to favor the term insider anthropology, whereas that subset of ethnic and minority anthropologists who study their own people tend to call what they do native anthropology” (p. 13). In this view, I argue that the term *native ethnography* will be more suitable for this ethnographic study of the Indonesian diaspora in America.

Apparently, the very basic issue raised by scholars in using native ethnography is the use of the term *native*. It is true that even Malinowski (1961) suggested the ethnographer should, “grasp the native’s point of view” (p. 290), but this idea was more associated with the Western perspective in understanding ‘foreign’ culture. Moreover, not only was the word *native* previously used to refer to colonized people, but it also highlighted the colonial roots of the term, and even this discipline of anthropology (Assad, 2002; Kuwayama, 2004). Nevertheless, Weston (1998) stated that, “if one is not born an anthropologist, neither is one born a native. Natives are produced as the object of the study that ethnographers make for themselves” (p. 193), and thus, encouraged the deliberate use of native ethnography as a research approach, as long as it is being used

with caution and the native ethnographer is aware of the notion of self-reflexivity (Kempny, 2012).

Similarly, Kraidy (1999) argued that native ethnography should be discussed in a more productive way. Distancing himself from the debate of authenticity and authoritative power of native ethnography, he focused on what could be offered by a native ethnographer. He further explained:

Rather than resorting to dubious claims of authenticity, the “native” ethnographic project must then be an appropriation of voice by a subject whose speaking position is located in the borderline between two worldviews: that of the “native” culture, the culture of intimate, taken for granted, quotidian knowledge, and the worldview of ethnographic, academic, systematic, and therefore, instrumental knowledge. (p. 461)

For Kraidy, a Lebanese diasporan in the US, conducting an ethnographic study in Lebanon, his homeland, his fieldwork was more seen as homecoming, whereas his familiarity with the culture being studied was considered as a huge advantage. Therefore, within this framework, native ethnography provides a significant contribution to the ethnographer in knowing his or her own culture. As a native ethnographer, Kraidy could optimize this advantage, which enabled him to uncover intimate details of the culture being studied. In my own case as an Indonesian student at an American university, entering a relatively new (but to some extent, familiar) community of Indonesians, not in Indonesia but in the US, I found myself in contrast to Kraidy’s experience. I had to struggle to gain entry and to develop rapport with my informants before I could establish

a constant mode of engagement in the field. This would make my experience of conducting a native ethnography different to other native anthropologists, where my personal biographies as well as experiences of the fieldwork should be understood as influencing my interaction with my research participants and the knowledge produced within the ethnographic fieldwork.

Native ethnography, as argued by Kraidy (1999), does not forbid the proximity between ethnographer and subjects of the study. Rather, he further argued that it is the, “betwixt-and-between speaking position, blending lived experience and systematic inquiry” (p. 462), that highlights the important characteristic of this anthropological approach. Far from being rejected, the dialogues between the researcher and interlocutors are allowed, and even encouraged, since it would help the ethnographer, despite his or her status as a native, to better understand the complexity of the culture being studied.

When taking into consideration of the ethnographer’s identity, doing native ethnography would be seen as more challenging than problematic. For instance, Abu-Lughod (1991) discussed how the status as ‘halfies’ or, “people whose national or cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration, overseas education, or parentage” (p. 137), might prevent an ethnographer from a mixed-culture to be fully native while studying his or her own culture. She further argued that for halfies, the issue of positionality even as a native ethnographer became quite problematic, mainly since, “standing on shifting ground makes it clear that every view is a view from somewhere and every act of speaking a speaking from somewhere” (p. 468). Often, coming from or being familiar with one culture does not automatically make someone a native

ethnographer, as experienced by halfies, explained Abu Lughod. The ethnographer's identity became an important aspect in this study.

Having a mixed-culture, Narayan (1993) challenged the dichotomy of insider and outsider as well as native and non-native ethnographer in conducting ethnographic fieldwork. By referring to the issue of identity, even though the ethnographer is sometimes seen as a native due to his or her cultural proximity with subjects of the study, there will always be some separate lines in terms of the subset of the ethnographer's identity. She insisted that, "factors such as education, gender, sexual orientation, class, race, or sheer duration of contacts may at different times outweigh the cultural identity we associate with insider or outsider status" (pp. 671-672).

Even though I do not come from a mixed-culture like Narayan, my own experience as an 'insider-outsider' to the subjects of my study, the Indonesian diaspora in the US, resonates with her experience. On one hand, I found myself quite comfortable in conducting native ethnography with the Indonesian diaspora community in the US mainly because I shared the same nationality and language with the people in my study. On the other hand, following Narayan's line of argument, I also found that most of the time I could not escape a feeling of anxiety during conversations with my informants, especially when we shared less commonality of subsets of identity, such as religion, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. Moreover, some Indonesians in diaspora questioned my status as a member of diaspora since I am a relative newcomer in diaspora since I only immigrated to the US in 2012. For this reason, even though my fieldwork could still be considered native ethnography, I could not say that my status has been fully



immersed into that of a native as an Indonesian diasporan. To some extent, as part of self-reflexivity, my identity as an Indonesian doctoral student in an American university, a male, a Muslim, of the middle class and inheriting the Javanese culture though living mostly in Jakarta prior to my residency in the US, should be mentioned as factors that influenced both the process and the outcome of this ethnographic study.

### **Doing Fieldwork in Two Metropolises: Experiencing the Field and Self-Reflexivity**

My media ethnography was conducted in two metropolitan areas—Washington, D. C. on the East Coast and Los Angeles on the West Coast. I spent a total of ten months of fieldwork, between October 2014 and July 2015, allocating less time, November and December 2014, to the Los Angeles metropolitan area. Since Clua (2013) suggested mentioning geographical characteristics of the subjects being studied, I will save the detailed discussion of this issue for the following chapter (Chapter VI). Hence, this ethnographic study focuses on three main reasons for selecting these metropolises as the main loci of the research project.

First, according to Hoeffel, Rastogi, Kim, and Shahid (2012), the 2010 US census reported that, among 95,000 Indonesians in the US, at least 3,000 of them are living in the Washington D. C. metropolitan area. It is estimated that more than 16,000 Indonesians, or the majority of the Indonesian diaspora in the US, live in California, and half of them reside in the Los Angeles area (Garoojian, 2005). The second reason this study emphasizes Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles is because these two places host the Indonesian Embassy and Indonesian Consulate Office, respectively, and thus anticipated activities related to politics and any other Indonesian-related affairs are highly

visible. The third reason why I conducted the study in these two locales is that each place has different demographic features of the Indonesian diaspora. Transnational Indonesians in the Washington, D. C. area are predominately Indonesian *pribumi* (native Indonesian) and Indonesian Muslims; their counterparts in the Los Angeles area are more dominated by ethnic-Chinese and non-Muslim Indonesian diaspora. This issue may lead to a pattern of differences of media consumption as well as the level of engagement of the Indonesian diaspora with the political sphere of their country of origin.

In addition, this study explores how transnational Indonesians in both locations were developing connections and networks among themselves as a way to engage with their homeland's politics. Primary attention was given to the institutionalized networks of the Indonesian diaspora in the US, such as diaspora associations like the IDN (Indonesian Diaspora Network), IMAAM (the Indonesian Muslim Association in America ), and *Permias* (*Persatuan Mahasiswa Indonesia di Amerika Serikat*, the Association of Indonesian Students in America). How these three institutions are used as hubs for the Indonesian diaspora to connect with their fellows, mainly in Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles, is included in the examination.

Doing a media ethnographic study in urban places, such as metropolitan areas, highlighted several issues during the course of the study. As mentioned by previous ethnographic research in urban settings, the most prominent obstacle for the ethnographer was that the people or community being observed tended to exhibit a high level of dispersal and mobility, resulting in difficulties observing daily routines or activities of subjects being studied (Rubyan-Ling, 2013; Sanjek, 1978). Therefore, Rubyan-Ling

(2013) argued, it is important for ethnographers to obtain and maintain access to both physical capital and financial resources in order to fully grasp the complexity of the urban context. While physical capital refers to the issue of having access to enter urban physical places, such as neighborhoods, buildings, or community centers, financial resources are more associated with the monetary power owned by the researcher in order to be mobile, and sometimes to enter the urban physical places.

In my own case, I had to obtain a particular status in order to gain a relatively easy access to several diasporic places. For instance, since I have status as an Indonesian student in an American university, I did not encounter problems receiving cooperation from the people in the Indonesian Embassy in Washington, D. C. and the Consulate Office in Los Angeles. This might not have been the case if I were not an Indonesian citizen. A similar principle also applied when I was allowed to participate in several community activities of the Indonesian Muslim diaspora in their very own mosque in the Washington, D. C. metropolitan area since I am also an Indonesian Muslim. This status allowed me wider access to the mosque, one of the primary physical sites of the Indonesian Muslim diaspora's community activities throughout the metropolitan area. On the other hand, this status limited my participation in some Indonesian Christian community events and gatherings, which were dominant in the Indonesian diaspora community in Los Angeles, and prevented me from being fully immersed in their routines.

Conducting ethnographic fieldwork in two metropolitan areas was also quite costly. This was one of the main obstacles during my fieldwork, mainly due to my

limited financial resources. Not only did I have to rent living space during the course of the fieldwork, I also needed to budget for travel across the country between the two metropolises, and also to move about to different places in each metropolitan area. Most of the time, I had to travel back and forth between various locations in order to follow my informants as well as to attend various Indonesian diaspora community events and activities.

Previously, Stoller (2003) provided an example of how to overcome the difficulties of conducting fieldwork in an urban setting. In his study of the West African diaspora in New York City, his strategy was to hang out on one street in Harlem to perform non-regular and less intensive interactions with the community. Only after he became familiar with the members of the community did he begin to be invited to more private spaces of those members of diaspora. This enabled him to conduct a more in-depth ethnographic fieldwork. It happened only after he spent two to three years in the field, which I did not have the luxury of doing due to time and financial restrictions.

Like Stoller, I started my fieldwork by hanging out at a certain place where I assumed I could meet potential informants. Unlike members of other diaspora who have established their own ethnic enclaves, the Indonesian diaspora do not live in one particular neighborhood. Indonesians in both metropolitan areas are dispersed to multiple places which frustrated me in trying to find a fixed place in which to focus my fieldwork. Instead, I went to the Indonesian embassy in Washington, D. C. as the starting point of my fieldwork. Despite the limitation that not all members of the Indonesian diaspora visit their embassy frequently, I found it beneficial to use this particular site as my point of

departure. From here, I tried my luck at identifying promising people to be invited to participate in my study. I also began to understand the pattern of the Indonesian diaspora population in this particular metropolitan area.

My initial contact with people in the Indonesian embassy happened during the Spring Break of March 2014, when I visited the city to conduct a pilot project related to this dissertation. Having only two weeks to spend in Washington, D. C., I was fortunate to meet people who were committee members of PPLN (*Panitia Pemilihan Luar Negeri*, the Overseas Election Committee). I was invited to one of their meetings at the embassy. At that time, they had borrowed office space at the embassy to prepare and to organize the upcoming 2014 Indonesian election. From this point, I could obtain information related to voting lists provided by PPLN and available online, which helped me to further identify potential informants for my study using snowball sampling. I began to make contact with several people and ask whether they would be willing to participate in my study once my dissertation proposal was approved by my committee members at Ohio University.

While waiting to defend my proposal in early Fall 2014, I was preparing to move from Athens, Ohio, to the Washington, D. C. metropolitan area. I decided to move to the Washington, D. C. area to accustom myself to the urban environment of this metropolitan environment prior to my actual ethnographic fieldwork. Moreover, I could develop a good rapport with my potential informants in advance. I also began to make informal contact with some potential informants, both in Washington, D. C. and in Los Angeles, even though we had not discussed my dissertation project yet.

But before I could fully enter into my fieldwork I had to find a place to stay in Washington, D. C. for at least one year. Through personal connections, I met a transnational Indonesian family in Germantown, Maryland. After explaining my intention to stay in the area, and that I was seeking housing during the course of my fieldwork, the family agreed to be my host. I rented space in their basement that included a single bedroom, a bathroom, and a large living room, which I used as my office. Though my rooms were mostly separated from the main house upstairs, I shared the kitchen, dining table, and television room with the host family. In these shared locations at home, we were usually involved in daily conversations as well as engaged in several media practices, such as watching television; listening to the radio; using mobile phones, tablets and laptops, in addition to participating in some media discussions. Through this host family, I was able to expand my social network, and later they invited me along to various Indonesian diaspora community activities.

After my proposal had been approved in early October 2014, I continued to contact members of the Indonesian diaspora, but this time I could explain more about my research project and asked whether they would be willing to be involved as research participants. Since I was living in an area some distance from downtown Washington, D. C., mobility was relatively difficult while I was doing my ethnographic fieldwork. Moreover, because I did not have my own car, I relied solely on public transportation throughout my fieldwork. During the rush hour, it took me at least one hour from Germantown to downtown Washington, D. C., after taking a bus and changing to the Red Line metro (subway) from Shady Grove station. Outside the rush hour, I had to spend

two to three hours commuting. The bus and metro fares were other obstacles. In total, I spent over \$20 per day for my travel expenses, and the cost increased when I travelled during the rush hour. The cost of the fieldwork was also higher when the meetings with my informants were in coffee shops, restaurants or ticketed events. I had to carefully consider time and cost issues when I was invited to attend community gatherings and meetings with my informants.

I allocated my earlier weeks in Washington, D. C. to developing rapport with some staff members at the Indonesian Embassy. Initially, I applied for an internship position at the Division of Media and Sociocultural Affairs, where I thought they could involve me in embassy-led Indonesian diaspora activities. However, due to some issues, this idea was abandoned, but I was still able to participate in several small Indonesian diaspora-related meetings initiated by the diplomats in Washington, D. C. They also introduced me to several key Indonesian diasporans in the metropolitan area, some of whom were willing to contribute to my research.

My second research location in the Washington, D. C. metropolitan area was the IMAAM Mosque in Silver Spring, Maryland. Following Widjanarko's (2007) method of identifying and expanding his social network with the Indonesian Muslim diaspora in New York City through an Indonesian mosque, I found this approach was beneficial, enabling me to meet a larger Indonesian diaspora population in this metropolis. The first time I went to IMAAM Mosque was in the holy month of Ramadan in Summer 2014, just a few weeks after the Indonesian diaspora community in the Washington, D. C. metropolitan area bought a church, which they later converted into a mosque. At that

time, only the lower floor of the building could be used for both praying and meeting since the upper floor had not been renovated to fit in as a mosque. On July 26, 2014, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), the benefactor of the mosque, came from Indonesia to inaugurate the building, which later also functioned as a community center for the Indonesian Muslim diaspora in Washington, D. C. metropolitan area. Following the inauguration, the Indonesian Muslim community began to attract more diasporans to this mosque through various religious activities. I spent much of the early part of my fieldwork at this mosque before I expanded my observations to include other places, depending upon where my informants resided or wanted to meet.

In November 2014, I flew to Los Angeles to conduct another field research with members of the Indonesian diaspora there. Similar to my approach in Washington, D. C., I began my fieldwork by attending some small meetings in the Indonesian Consulate General's Office at 3457 Wilshire Blvd. I was introduced to local staff at the Consulate by a diplomat at the embassy in Washington, D. C., whom I contacted prior to my arrival in Los Angeles. From this point on, I gradually expanded my contacts to other members of diaspora in the metropolitan area. Based on my experience in conducting fieldwork in Washington, D. C., I was able to identify the pattern of Indonesian diaspora routines in Los Angeles, which was not very different from their counterparts on the East Coast. However, unlike my experience in Washington, I found that it was more difficult to find a temporary place to stay in Los Angeles. Since most of my contacts were unable to provide detailed information about any affordable potential place that I could rent during my ten weeks of fieldwork in this area, I decided to use AirBnB to rent a shared-room in



an apartment in Koreatown, only a 15-minute walk from the Indonesian Consulate. By living close to the Consulate, I hoped I could optimize my short stay in Los Angeles to attend some diaspora meetings as well as to conduct interviews with my informants. Ten members of the Indonesian diaspora contributed to my fieldwork in this city. I ended my field research in Los Angeles by the end of the 2014 and returned to Washington, D. C. to resume my research there until mid-August 2015.

Most of the interviews I conducted in my research in both Los Angeles and Washington, D. C., lasted 30 to 60 minutes. In total, I conducted 20 interviews in Washington, D. C. and 10 interviews in Los Angeles. In each city the topics of discussion related to media behavior as well as transnational-homeland political participation of members of the Indonesian diaspora. Among the research participants, there were 8 female and 22 male informants. Their ages also varied, between 27 and 80 years old. Meanwhile, in terms of ethnicity, I interviewed 4 ethnic-Chinese Indonesians, 11 Javanese, 3 Sundanese, 4 Minahasans, and also 8 Minang diasporans. In general, I utilized the combination between semi-structured (around 15 interviews) and unstructured interviews as well as casual conversations with the research participants. In terms of their media use, some diasporans reported that they spent around 30 to 60 minutes on an average day to access Indonesian media content while they allocated around 60 to 120 minutes per day to consume American media.

Initially, it was difficult for me to invite members of diaspora, both in Los Angeles and in Washington, to participate in my study as informants. Whenever I disclosed my status as an Indonesian student at Ohio University majoring in media and

conducting research on how the Indonesian diaspora use media to participate in Indonesian politics, they often took that to mean I was a journalist, and later encouraged me to talk to the Indonesian diaspora who work for the *Voice of America (VoA)* instead. Only when I changed my approach, by saying that I was interested in talking about Indonesian politics, were many members of diaspora attracted to my research. From this point of departure, I could expand my conversations to their media behavior with the relationship to their transnational political participation in Indonesian politics.

However, this approach was not always successful in recruiting members of diaspora to participate in the interviews. For instance, one man in Virginia declined to be interviewed since he thought that his current employer would discourage him from being further involved in discussing Indonesian politics. In some meetings, several members of the Indonesian diaspora refused to be recorded during the interview and when asked the reason, they explained they felt uncomfortable with a recording device. One of them shared the story of a bad experience he had with some Indonesian journalists who interviewed him but later misquoted him. This experience made him more cautious with anyone who wanted to interview him. Another informant said that he considered the conversation to be somewhat secretive since some of the information he would share should not yet be shared with the public, and insisted that I take notes rather than record our conversation.

On other occasions, many of the Indonesian-Chinese diaspora in Los Angeles preferred to talk about business and culture rather than Indonesian politics, thus, preventing me from obtaining significant insights from this particular ethnic group of the

Indonesian diaspora. Some other native Indonesians, such as the ethnic Javanese, Sundanese and Minahasan, tended to be more open in sharing their experience of transnational-homeland media consumption as well as their political attitude related to the Indonesian political sphere. Eventually, I learned that many ethnic-Chinese Indonesians, as minorities in their own country of origin, tended to be reluctant to talk about politics mainly due to their negative experience with their homeland politics, while the native Indonesians did not share a similar experience with those minorities. For these reasons, I became more aware of how my informants perceived both our conversations and our relationships, and I tried to be more cautious about whether certain information could be included in my analysis. With some sensitive cases, I made an effort not to reveal my informants' personal identities, using pseudonyms throughout my ethnographic research.

Sharing commonality with my informants was another important factor worth mentioning about the fieldwork. Coming from the very same home town, or sharing the same ethnicity and religion with the members of diaspora could be an advantage since this often made the informants more willing to share their experiences. For example, as Indonesian living in Jakarta, I found that diasporans who also came from the same city tended to be more open to talk to me. Based on my own reflexivity, I assume that this was also encouraged by the fact that we shared more commonality, or at least we found some overlap in experiences. Therefore, it was easier for us to discuss various topics related to our hometown, such as current local political issues in Jakarta. This 'shared experience' was less prominent when I interviewed members of diaspora originated from

other cities in Indonesia (e.g., Medan, Manado, Surabaya), and thus, I had to find a more general topic to discuss with them when I interviewed these members of diaspora. This does not mean that I undervalued the experience of diasporans who came from outside the Jakarta metropolitan area since their experience and understanding of Indonesian politics might be different with those Jakartan diasporans, and also no less than important. Moreover, I believe that obtaining information from various people, regardless of their place of origin in Indonesia, is important to enrich my understanding of Indonesian diaspora's experience of mediatized transnational-homeland politics.

It is also worth mentioning that coming from Jakarta also indicates a distinct social status for many Indonesians, including those in diaspora. Not only because Jakarta is the capital city of the country, it has long been considered as the 'center' of Indonesian politics and economics. For decades, Suharto's New Order government had implemented the politics of centralization, where he not only emphasized the role of the capital city as the center of the country's politics, his centralized government also controlled mostly everything from Jakarta (Sukma, 2005). In terms of its role in economics, Jakarta has long been considered as a 'magnet' for Indonesians from other parts of the country. A famous Indonesian writer, Pramoedya Ananta Toer (1976) even once satirically wrote, "the wind blows through the provinces whispering that one cannot be fully Indonesian until one has seen Jakarta" (p. 73). Therefore, Jakarta has been regarded as the primary destination of migrations by many Indonesians from other provinces, including my parents who migrated to this city from Central Java back in the 1970s, seeking for better education and work. While not all Jakartans automatically obtained a higher

socioeconomic status, Ajidarma (2002) argued that (people who came) *from Jakarta* means, “from a superior place ... it means excess, wealthier, more knowledgeable, more modern, and this has an effect of becoming more powerful” (p. 19). Even though I was reluctant to be associated with these identifications—especially since my status as a student also means that I am far from wealthy—I found that this association was inevitable. Also, I learned that I could somewhat utilize this privileged position to obtain access to people in diaspora who came from the same city as mine. On several occasions, some members of diaspora even asked my opinion concerning contemporary Indonesian politics since I came from Jakarta and they thought that I might be more knowledgeable in the topic. Even though I also gave them my humble opinion on the topic, during the interviews I frequently had to reemphasize that I was more interested in listening to their opinion rather than mine.

Similarly, in the case of religion, as an Indonesian Muslim, I found relatively stronger connection with Indonesian Muslim diaspora communities compared to non-Muslim diasporans. I also realized that this status of mine had influenced the way I reached my potential informants. Indeed, it was easier for me to start any conversations with my fellow Indonesian Muslims in diaspora other than with other religious groups, in addition to the chance of obtaining invitation to their community meetings. Therefore, I was more comfortable with having discussions about media and Indonesian politics with Muslim diasporans in a mosque rather than with people from other religious group in diaspora.

Furthermore, being a Muslim in Indonesia—just like being a Jakartan—also means that I obtained a distinct position among my fellow nationals since not only Muslims are the majority, Indonesia is also the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. While this status as an Indonesian Muslim helped me to develop rapport with the Muslim communities in diaspora, this issue prevented me from obtaining such close relationship with the Christian diasporans, for example. In fact, in contrast to the condition in homeland, Indonesian Muslims in the US are outnumbered by non-Muslim diaspora. As a result, the experience of diasporans outside the Indonesian Muslim communities remained important since they comprise the majority of Indonesians in diaspora. Therefore, I tried my best not to be fully immersed by my religion-associated status when conducting my fieldwork because it would make no sense to pay a greater attention to one religious group over another.

Moreover, I was fortunate that I was treated hospitably and experienced relative no difficulties in developing my relationship with diasporans from different religious backgrounds. During my fieldwork in Los Angeles, for instance, some members of Indonesian-Christian diaspora even invited me to attend their religion-associated community activities—with the main purpose of introducing me to more people in diaspora who might be willing to participate in or could give more insight to my study—but I had to politely turn down their generous invitation. Where possible, I attempted to detach this kind of religion-based association during the fieldwork, mainly because my research focus is more about media use and transnational-homeland political activism of Indonesian diaspora, and not so much about their religious practices. Yet, I frequently

failed to diminish entirely the connection between religion identification and diasporic experience of many Indonesians in diaspora. Instead, rather than trying to ignore the connection, I eventually learned how to embrace this issue as one of the important features of this study.

Another interesting issue was the use of language. During the fieldwork, I always used *Bahasa Indonesia*, the Indonesian national language, when I interviewed all of my informants—where this was also one of the benefits of my status as a native-ethnographer. Moreover, even though all of them are fluent in English, they frequently disclosed that they would be more comfortable in talking to me in Indonesian; where I never disapproved this idea to begin with. Here, my language ability in *Bahasa Indonesia*, though I frequently took it for granted, allowed me to enter the fieldwork relatively easier than I ever expected. Thus, I did not find any significant barriers in terms of the language we used during various conversations with my informants. Nevertheless, this was not the case when the issue of ethnicity came into consideration.

Since many members of Indonesian diaspora in the US came from different ethnicities, they also tend to use different local languages in their daily life in the diaspora, especially when they communicate with people from the same ethnicity. For instance, during my fieldwork in Washington, D. C. I learned that there was a tendency for Javanese diasporans to prefer to use Javanese language over *Bahasa Indonesia* when they meet with people who shared the same ethnicity. However, (even though both my parents are Javanese) I am not that fluent in Javanese, and thus, this prevented me from being fully immersed with their culture. On the contrary, having an experience of living

in Bandung for a few months helped me to understand Sundanese language moderately. Eventually, this encouraged some Sundanese diasporans to be more willing to disclose themselves to me. One diasporan that I met in a Vietnamese restaurant in Silver Spring, Maryland, where Indonesian diaspora frequently visited even mistook me for a Sundanese when he asked, “Which part of Bandung are you from?” He was surprised when he found that I am not a Sundanese; while I also mentioned that my wife is a Sundanese, I had to explain to him that I also encountered a similar experience with other Sundanese friends so many times when I was in Indonesia.

On another occasion, I found that my socio-economic status also played an important role in both enhancing and limiting my access to the potential informants. For example, in the case of my status as a student, this had helped me to overcome the prejudice among the members of diaspora when I invited them to participate in my study—since initially many of them tended to be reluctant to be interviewed. For this reason, to some extent, I began to utilize this privilege status as a student to expand my reach to the members of the community. Having graduated from the University of Indonesia also amplified my ability to connect with people in diaspora who also went to the same university. When I met Indonesian diasporans in Washington, D. C., they usually asked me where did I go to school prior to coming to the US. When I said I obtained my Master’s Degree from the Department of Communication Studies of the University of Indonesia, some diasporans automatically disclosed that they were also alumni from the very same university—which they later informed me about the establishment of the American Chapter of *Ikatan Alumni Universitas Indonesia* (the



Association of Alumni of the University of Indonesia). From here, I was gradually able to develop a closer relationship with this group of diasporans. Moreover, during the fieldwork, I was fortunate enough that they frequently engaged in various events related to homeland politics where I was regularly invited to attend the meetings.

However, this strategy was not always successful. To some extent, having a status (only) as a student—barely considered as middle class—I realized that some members of Indonesian diaspora who came from a higher socioeconomic status were more reluctant to participate in my study. I also learned that they did not fully consider my research as a serious matter and express their disinterest in participating in the study, mainly because of my status as a mere student. Furthermore, I felt that there was a sense to treat a student as a ‘boy’ in Indonesian culture; where someone who still holds a status as a student will be regarded not yet an ‘adult.’ Some members of Indonesian diasporan from a higher socioeconomic status, especially those from elder generation, tended to treat me this way. I expect this might not have happened if I were a full professor from a prominent American university (perhaps, MIT, Harvard or Stanford University) conducting a research on the very same topics, and not a student.

In opposition to this, many diasporans who came from middleclass and lower socioeconomics did not show any significant barrier when they talked to me during the fieldwork. Many of them were willing to spend their time to discuss various issues related to media use and Indonesian politics once they knew I was a student conducting my research on this topic. One of them even disclosed that he was happy to be able to discuss contemporary Indonesian politics with a doctoral student in an American

university like me. Indeed, having a status as an Indonesian student studying abroad, especially in the US, is regarded as a privilege by many Indonesians, including those people in diaspora whom many of them revealed that they did not even get a chance to pursue university education beyond their undergraduate degree or even high school. For these reasons, I learned that it would be more beneficial for me to focus my study with people in the diaspora who came from the middleclass and lower socioeconomics rather than relying solely on 'elite' Indonesian diasporans. Nevertheless, I tried to remain inclusive as possible to invite members of Indonesian diaspora from various backgrounds, including people from different religion, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status while I maintained critical attitude toward my own positionality.

Meanwhile, I just realized that sharing commonality of political perspective was also a huge advantage when I approached the Indonesian diaspora after a few weeks of my fieldwork. When I opened the conversation about current homeland political issues, such as the result of the presidential election, it was common for them to ask me whether I supported the president-elect Jokowi. Whenever I had a chance to disclose my positive attitude toward Jokowi, some of his supporters became more willing to express their very own comments about Indonesian politics. They felt that I was their fellow political ally, which helped them to be more relaxed in discussing their political attitude toward Indonesian politics. Other Indonesians in diaspora who had supported the defeated candidate were not really curious whether I was their compatriot. But I felt they became more cautious in providing comments related to the contemporary political news in Indonesia since they were afraid that I supported Jokowi. Nevertheless, I was lucky

enough that my status as a student made me seem more a neutral party for many of these Indonesian diaspora.

Finally, my role as a ‘native ethnographer’ was considered ambiguous, not only by me but also by some members of the Indonesian diaspora. Indeed, I am an Indonesian who has been displaced from my homeland, and I have been living in the US for almost four years. Some people might agree that I am also a member of the Indonesian diaspora, regardless of my temporary status. This is a common understanding of those having an inclusive definition of the Indonesian diaspora, which includes anyone who considered themselves as Indonesian people but are living in a foreign country. Some ‘exclusive’ diasporans (i.e., people who considered themselves elites), however, still argued that I was not fully part of their diasporic community for various reasons. For instance, due to my temporary status as an international student in the US using J-1 visa, I did not have the privilege of a more permanent residency in the host country compared to many members of the Indonesian diaspora. Therefore, since these people in diaspora thought that I would definitely return home to Indonesia once I finished my study in the US, they still considered my status merely as an ‘outsider’ rather than an ‘insider’ as fully Indonesian diasporan in America.

To sum up, by discussing my positionality while I conducted the ethnographic fieldwork, including how I involved in conversations with all of my informants, this should be regarded as an attempt to reveal the extent that this dissertation project is, somewhat, molded by my personal biographies. This current study should also be considered more as a subjective interpretation of an Indonesian student in an American

university along with his biographical and historical background in his attempt to understand the complexity of diasporic experience of a diverse overseas Indonesians. Rather than offering a generalization of experience of Indonesian diaspora's mediatized long-distance politics, I suggest readers view this study in a specific context where all of these issues I mentioned should be seen as involved in the way I understand this media-centered practice exhibited by people in diaspora.

## **Chapter V: Setting the Scene:**

### **The Indonesian Diaspora in Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles Metropolitan Areas**

This chapter describes the general context of the fieldwork scene with the focus on the two metropolitan areas of Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles, each with a significant Indonesian diaspora presence. The purpose of this chapter is not only to give an overview of the socio-cultural environment of Indonesians in both locations, but also to provide insight into their migratory reasons as well as the context of how transnational practices are situated in the country of settlement.

In the first section of the chapter, I discuss the demographic characteristics of Indonesians in the Washington, D. C. metropolitan area, which is one of the most dynamic Indonesian communities in the country. In addition, I examine the relationship between the members of diaspora and their community activities and place them in a wider picture of the diasporic experience of Indonesians in the US. Even though Washington, D. C. may not be the primary host of overseas Indonesians in America, it can be argued that the presence of the Indonesian Embassy has made the existence of Indonesians in the US capital city significant, especially when the practice of long-distance politics has been the main concern of this study. In addition, the role of the Indonesian Embassy in the practice of transnational politics will be further highlighted. Transnational politics initiated by the members of diaspora and the context of political discussion and participation in everyday-life situations will be underlined in the discussion of the Indonesian Muslim Association in America (IMAAM) Center, which

hosts the first and only Indonesian mosque in metropolitan Washington, D. C., one of the main community centers for the Indonesian diaspora in this locale.

In the second part of this chapter, I explore the presence of the Indonesian diaspora community in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. As discussed previously, Los Angeles has been the major host for Indonesians in the US, and thus provides a distinct illustration of Indonesians diasporic life in this country. The historical context of the Indonesian community in Los Angeles, as well as the story of their migration, will be included in the analysis along with their relationship with the homeland's political engagement. Similar to the case of Washington, D. C., the practice of 'transnationalism from above', which refers to the top-down approach of transnationalism conducted by global corporations, media, and political institutions like a nation-state government (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998; Vertovec, 2009), is situated in the presence of the Indonesian government's representatives at the Indonesian Consulate General in Los Angeles. While not all the socio-political activities of these displaced people revolve around the Consulate Office, this place has been an important venue to maintain connections with the homeland for these members of diaspora, especially for politics-related businesses. As for the 'transnationalism from below', which means transnational practices initiated by the grass roots (Vertovec, 2009), I investigate how the various community centers, religious sites, cultural events, etc., have also influenced the Indonesian diaspora's attitude towards the Indonesian political sphere.

The final section of this chapter is devoted to discussion of the relationship between the Indonesian diaspora in the greater Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles areas.

Though the trans-local connection between the members of diaspora in both locations might be limited due to physical distance, the presence of media and communication technology could be seen as bridging these two locales. Although the interactions of diaspora in the two cities were more visible at a personal level, the inauguration of the Indonesian Diaspora Network (IDN) at the first Indonesian Diaspora Congress held in Los Angeles in 2012 should be interpreted as a key moment that opened a wider opportunity for trans-local cooperation of these people in addition to the already established transnational activities.

### **Socio-Demography of the Indonesian Diaspora in Washington, D. C.**

There is no current consensus about the exact number of Indonesians living in Washington, D. C. According to Garoogian (2005), back in 2000 there were 1,242 in Washington, D. C., not counting those residing in the surrounding counties that constitute the Washington, D. C. metropolitan area, such as Montgomery County, Maryland, and Alexandria City, Virginia. The number had increased to 3,895 when the US census bureau updated the survey in 2010 (Hoeffel et al., 2012). This second number also included Indonesians living in the metropolitan area. Meanwhile, IDN had a different estimation when Mohamad Al-Arief, the President of IDN, mentioned that there were at least 15,000 Indonesian diaspora living in this area (“Memperkenalkan Diaspora,” 2014). This is a relatively small number compared to other immigrant groups or even to other ethnic-Asian populations in the same area, but should be considered significant if it is compared to the populations of Indonesians in other states in the US. The Indonesian population in the Greater Washington, D. C. area is the fourth largest in the country,

outnumbered only by the population of the Indonesian diaspora in California, New York, and Texas. The significant number of Indonesians living in the Washington, D. C. metropolitan area also indicates how the capital city has been seen as an important place for immigrants like the Indonesian diaspora to seek a better life, either socially or economically.

The early Indonesian migrants came even before Indonesia gained its independence in 1945, especially when Dutch officers came to the US and brought along their native Indonesian domestic workers (Balbed, 2006, quoted in Cho, 2011). Andre, one of my informants in Maryland, told me of stories about how the early settlers came from ships that docked in the port of Baltimore, Maryland. He further explained that the Indonesian presence became more visible in later periods when the Indonesian Embassy was officially opened in Washington, D. C. in the 1950s. Indonesian diplomats along with their staffs and families were seen as the early Indonesian migrant groups. When their assignment ended, Andre argued, some of them decided to stay in the US. Another informant, who did not want to be named, also told me how (former) Indonesian Embassy employees applied for permanent residency and stayed for a longer period of time. Some of them even changed their citizenship, especially those who married Americans. In addition to the later diaspora who came to the US for various reasons, these people constituted what I observed as the present Indonesian diaspora community in the Washington, D. C. metropolitan area.

The increasing number of Indonesians in the US, especially in the Washington area, has encouraged these displaced citizens to form social organizations that could



incorporate the needs of maintaining their identity as Indonesians as well as helping them to adapt to the new life in America. Abdullah Balbed (2006), who was a local staff member at the Indonesian Embassy, wrote the story of *Ikatan Keluarga Indonesia* (Indonesian Family Association, IKI), one of the first Indonesian diaspora organizations which later transformed into the Indonesian-American Association. According to Balbed (2006), this association was founded on March 2, 1952, by several Indonesians living in Washington, D. C. where most of them were the local staff at the Indonesian Embassy. He further explained that the initial aim of the association was to support the national bond among Indonesians living in this area. Balbed (2006) mentioned that Ardy Sutono was elected the first chairman of IKI and that the organization published a monthly bulletin called *Warta IKI*, consisting Indonesian news as well as stories of Indonesian diaspora families and community activities.

At that time, as mentioned by Balbed (2006), Indonesians were clustered into several groups, such as employees of the Indonesian Embassy, World Bank/IMF, *Voice of America*, and Indonesian students and their families; thus, in the following years, the role of IKI became important for rather more than just a meeting point for Indonesian diaspora in Washington, D. C. Balbed also noted that it was turned into a support system for the diaspora, especially for those newly arrived in the US. Based on my own observations, the newcomers would need help on to how to settle in this country, which includes support for housing, obtaining social security numbers and driving licenses as well as finding appropriate jobs. In addition, IKI continues to help the diaspora with

arranging Indonesian weddings, hosting religious rituals and other culture-related activities (Balbed, 2006).

By the end of the 1950s, Balbed (2006) explained that the association even developed interstate connections with members of the Indonesian diaspora in New York by hosting *Pekan Olahraga Masyarakat Indonesia* (Indonesian Community's Sport Week, PORAMI), a sporting event which was held every year over the Labor Day weekend. He argued that PORAMI was an important event at which the Indonesian diaspora communities in both New York and the DC area could gather and get to know each other. According to Balbed, the event was held in Washington D. C. one year, and in New York the next. Unfortunately, PORAMI was discontinued in 1992 due to lack of funds (Balbed, 2006; Cho, 2011).

In addition to the national-centered associations like IKI, Washington, D.C. has various local-oriented groups. According to Mohamad Al-Arief, one of my informants who works for the World Bank, there are at least 11 local organizations in this metropolitan area. For example, Indonesians who came from Western Java gathered in a Sundanese diaspora association, *Rukun Warga Pasundan*. I was invited to its gatherings several times during my fieldwork. Similarly, people associated with the Mihanasan culture formed their own local community called *Matuari*. *Minang USA* was formed by the Indonesian diaspora who came from West Sumatera or who had inherited Minang culture, with the main purpose strengthening relationships among the West Sumatran diaspora as well as to promote their culture. Most of these 'hometown' associations hold major community events at least once a year and have been considered meeting points for

the Indonesian diaspora who came from the same hometown even though they open to other Indonesians from different regions. During my fieldwork, I had a chance to attend *Pasar Minang* (Minang market), held at Wisma Indonesia, the residence of the Indonesian Ambassador to the United States. Members of the Minang diaspora give cultural performances and offer food stalls which sell Minang cuisine. Other Indonesians participated in the event as well. I saw these community events were used not only to solidify the ethno-locale bonds, but at the same time they maintained a strong connection among the diverse Indonesian diaspora in the Washington, D. C. metropolitan area.

**The Indonesian Embassy and transnationalism from above.** The Indonesian Embassy mansion is one of the most beautiful buildings in the neighborhood. At the entrance, there is a huge white statue of the Hindu Goddess, Saraswati, the Goddess of knowledge, wisdom, and arts, accompanying three little children reading a book. The red-and-white flag of Indonesia, just a few steps inside the gate, is visible from across the street. The mansion, located near the intersection of 21<sup>st</sup> Street and Massachusetts Ave. NW, is only a five-minute walk from the Dupont Circle Metro Station. This embassy is one of the most important venues for the Indonesian diaspora not only in the Greater Washington, D. C. area but also in the US.

The mansion was built more than a hundred years ago. According to Balbed (2001), it was constructed by Thomas Walsh, a wealthy Irish immigrant who spent nearly a million dollars to build this 60-room mansion. Later, Walsh's widow gave the building to her son-in law, Edward MacLean, the owner of *The Washington Post* at that time (James, 1971). On December 19, 1951, Ali Sastroamidjojo, the first Indonesian

Ambassador to the US, bought the mansion for \$335,000 and in 1982, additional offices were built at the rear wing of the mansion to handle the increasing necessity of the diplomatic work (Balbed, 2001; Masykur, 2015).

I first visited the Embassy when I had to renew my official passport, which had expired in June, 2014. At that time, I was only allowed to enter the consular office and stick to my passport-renewal business. My first impression was that the staff created a high social barrier to everyone who visited the place, especially Indonesians. I felt that I was treated like an outsider, a foreigner, I saw one staff member warmly welcoming the Americans who also came the office during my visit. However, my perception of the Embassy has gradually changed during subsequent visits in the following months of my fieldwork.

Several services offered by the Embassy can be considered as the practice of ‘transnationalism from above’. The livelihood of the Indonesian diaspora in the US is most associated with several types of activities. The first is the consular service. Through this service, Indonesians can visit the Embassy to update or renew their passports, just as I did. In most cases, Indonesian passports need to be renewed every five years. Therefore, those who have been living in the US for more than five years, have very likely visited the consular service office at the Embassy. The issue is, even though these Indonesians get a chance to visit the consular service office, their interaction with the Embassy personnel would be extremely limited. The consular office itself is located at the far-left corner of the new Embassy building and relatively disconnected from the main building. The office itself is too small and can accommodate only one staff member and no more

than 10 visitors can enter the office at one time. People usually spend less than five minutes in this office and the interactions between these people are very limited as well. During my first visit, I observed that no more than five Indonesians came to the consular office and they left immediately once their business was done. A few Americans also visited the office, mainly to obtain visas or to ask questions related to their upcoming visits to Indonesia.

The second service offered by the Embassy is public relations. This service is part of the duties of *Divisi Penerangan dan Sosial Budaya* (the Socialization and Socio-Cultural Division, Pensosbud) of the Indonesian Embassy, which has an obligation to socialize any government policies related to the livelihood of Indonesians in the US. In addition, staff members at Pensosbud are required to be involved in the community to maintain direct and strong connections between the Embassy and the Indonesian community. Occasionally, Pensosbud hosts Embassy-initiated community events, which are mainly meant to preserve the nationalism spirit among the Indonesians abroad as well as to commemorate national events. These include organizing Indonesian Festivals and Food Bazaars, hosting the Indonesian Independence Day celebration every August 17, hosting an open house at Wisma Indonesia during religious holidays like *Idul Fitri*, *Idul Adha* and Christmas, as well as arranging public discussions and meetings with the Indonesian diaspora related to various contemporary issues.

The next important service provided by the Embassy is educational and cultural. This service is mainly conducted by *Kantor Atase Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan* (the Office of Educational and Cultural Attaché, *Atikbud*). This office hosts various cultural

events with the main purpose of promoting Indonesian culture to the American society. For example, the Atikbud office arranged a world-record breaking event of *angklung* (traditional musical instrument made of bamboo, originated from West Java) music at the National Mall on July 9, 2011. This event gathered around 5,000 people, not only Indonesians but people from different nationalities. It was led by Mang Udjo, an *angklung* maestro who was invited by the Office of Educational and Cultural Attaché to come to the US from West Java (Bayuni, 2011). On a more regular basis, the office offers a weekly course of gamelan, a traditional musical ensemble from Java and Bali. An instructor was brought from Indonesia to teach the class. During the Spring Semester 2015, I had a chance to take a small part-time job in this office as an Indonesian language instructor for the Embassy's class of *Bahasa Indonesia*. Three of my students told me that one of their parents is an Indonesian married to an American. Therefore, they wanted to be able to speak Indonesian to better understand and communicate with their parents as well as to learn their culture. Through this kind of activity, I could observe the function of the office in fostering Indonesia through cultural promotion, both to the American society and to the Indonesian diaspora community.

In terms of their educational service, the Office of Educational and Cultural Attaché assists Indonesian students studying at American universities. The assistance mostly consists of providing information related to how to manage academic life in the US, finding scholarships and funding as well as promoting Indonesian students' activities to a wider audience in the country. During my fieldwork, I encountered several Indonesian students who visited the office to discuss some academic issues with the staff.

A PhD student from a university in Texas came to the office to ask for help with a return ticket to Indonesia. His sponsor was not able to assist him with the ticket even though he had just finished his studies in Texas. Another visit was from two Indonesian students who had finished their English short-courses and attempted to enroll in American universities. Even though the office did not give any financial support in either case, the staff provided these students with information on how they could obtain funding for such matters.

The Office of Educational and Cultural Attaché is also responsible for Permias activities, not only in Washington, D. C. area but also throughout the US. Closer ties between Atikbud and Permias in Washington, D. C. can be found when the office is directly involved in Permias DC activities, such as arranging student discussions and sport competitions. Most of the time, the Atikbud staff attend events held by Permias chapters at various universities in different states, especially when they host Indonesian-related events, such as Indonesian Night and Indonesian Festival. Once a year, the attaché attends the Permias national convention, with the aim to maintain a connection between the attaché and the Indonesian students' associations. At some point, the involvement of the government's institutions like the Office of Educational and Cultural Attaché are provided as official support from the homeland's government for the diaspora such as the Indonesian students here. However, this may also impact the students' attitude regarding their political independence from the government. In most cases, the students are not allowed to be involved in politics-related activities or to openly express criticism of the Indonesian government.

The Political Attaché Office of the Indonesian Embassy could also be considered as implementing the practice of ‘transnationalism from above’, especially related to the government’s policy towards the bilateral political relationship between the Indonesian and US governments. It is true that most of the diplomatic work targets the high-level political relationship between Indonesian diplomats and their American counterparts. This fact, though, does not exempt the Political Attaché Office from assisting the Indonesian diaspora in dealing with various political issues. In some cases, the Political Attaché Office assists the diaspora in providing information about major political decisions made by the Indonesian government, which may have an impact on the livelihood of people back home in Indonesia as well as those who live in diaspora. During my participant-observations, the office also hosted community meetings with ministries or parliamentary members who came to Washington, D. C. from the homeland and shared the perspectives of these politicians and policy-makers to the Indonesian diaspora community. Through these kinds of events, a mutual understanding between the Indonesian government and the Indonesian diaspora on political matters is expected to be able to be preserved.

One of the most important tasks of the political attaché that relates to the diaspora’s political participation in homeland’s politics is hosting the national elections. Once every five years, the Indonesian government holds national elections, which constitute local or regional elections, and national legislative elections and followed by the presidential elections in the following months. Overseas Indonesians are not allowed to vote in local or regional elections and can participate only in the national elections. On



behalf of KPU (*Komisi Pemilihan Umum*, the General Election Commission), the political attaché will inaugurate PPLN (*Panitia Pemilihan Pemilu Luar Negeri*, the Overseas Election Committee) and assist the committee in organizing the elections. In the US, six local PPLNs are assigned to manage the elections based on the working area of the Embassy and Consulates General. Therefore, other than the local PPLN in Washington, D. C. the Indonesian diaspora communities have their own overseas election committees in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Houston, Chicago, and New York. These local chapters coordinate with the political attaché and PPLN in Washington, D. C. as well as the KPU in Jakarta. The committees consist of several members of the Indonesian diaspora, in addition to the Embassy and Consulate staff members who are selected through open recruitment several months prior to the election.

**IMAAM Center as the religious hub for the Indonesian Muslim diaspora.**

Prior to the 1980s, the number of Indonesian diaspora in the Greater Washington, D. C. Area was relatively small. My informants said that a gradual increase was shown in the late 1980s when many new immigrants came to the US for economic and educational reasons. Due to the increasing presence of Indonesians in this metropolitan area, there was a need to accommodate their religious necessities, such as a specific place to perform religious rituals. Indonesian Christians found relatively few obstacles since they could join various American churches available in their neighborhoods. Such was not the case with the Indonesian Muslim diaspora. For them, even finding a mosque nearby was difficult. Since in the late 1980s, only a few mosques existed in this metropolitan area. The Islamic Center of Washington, located on Embassy Row, functions as both a mosque

and a community center. It became the major destination for many early Indonesian Muslim diaspora to practice Islam, performing Friday prayers and holding Islamic weddings. One Muslim couple explained to me that they had to marry at this mosque because the Indonesian diaspora lacked its very own religious venue at that time.

The increasing number of Indonesian Muslims in the Washington, D. C. metropolitan area encouraged these Indonesian diaspora to find a way to preserve their religious identity as well as to practice their beliefs. In 1993, the Indonesian Muslim Association in America (IMAAM) was founded in Rockville, Maryland, as a religious and non-profit organization. Its primary role is to promote religious and social activities among the Indonesian Muslims in the Greater Washington, D. C. area. In the following years, IMAAM developed *madrasah* (Sunday School) for the younger generations with the main purpose of introducing Islamic values to the second generation of the Indonesian Muslim diaspora. Arif Mustofa, the President of IMAAM, shared his story about the early periods of this community. Since there was no permanent place/building for these activities at that time, he said, IMAAM had to borrow the Bethesda Elementary School. Even during such Islamic holidays as *Idul Fitri* and *Idul Adha*, they needed to borrow schools and community centers to perform the prayers. Through the members' fundraising, IMAAM finally could buy two houses in Veirs Mill Rd, Rockville, but could not get the county to issue a permit to use these buildings as religious sites, mainly because the buildings were not located in the religious zoning.

Arif further explained that the need for their very own Indonesian mosque came to the surface in the late 1990s. The increasing local Indonesian Muslim population

became one of the primary reasons, especially when the second and even third generations of this diasporic group continued to grow. Unlike the Indonesian diaspora in another cities, there was a tendency for Indonesians living in this metropolitan area to be less eager to move out to another places. Even though the Indonesian Muslim community in the Greater Washington, D. C. area had a relatively close relationship with the Indonesian Embassy at that time, a more effective lobby was still needed. IMAAM began to lobby the Indonesian government to support the realization of its dream of having an Indonesian mosque in the D. C. metropolitan area. IMAAM cited the Indonesian Muslim community in New York City, which had already established their own Indonesian mosque in Queens, as an example.

As mentioned by Arif, IMAAM later lobbied the Indonesian Embassy, mainly through Ambassador Dino Pati Djalal, to persuade the Indonesian government to support the idea of an Indonesian mosque in the capital city. When IMAAM members saw an online advertisement offering the First Baptist Church of Montgomery for sale, they attempted to buy it and convert it to a mosque. Eventually Ambassador Dino, who had a close relationship with President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), the Indonesian president at that time, lobbied the president for the funding for the mosque. President SBY passed a proposal to the Indonesian parliament, which authorized financial support of three million dollars to purchase the building. After several renovations were made in the structure, President SBY came to Washington, D. C. to inaugurate the mosque on September 25, 2014 (“SBY Resmikan,” 2014). Located at 9100 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, the mosque was strategically located on the border of Maryland and Washington,

D. C. and had easy access to public transportation. These are the two main reasons why the Indonesian Muslim diaspora within the metropolitan area were eager to regularly visit this mosque.



*Figure 5. 1. IMAAM Center Mosque in Silver Spring, Maryland.*

Moreover, once the community established its Indonesian mosque, transnational activism was also present in this community center, in addition to the regular religious practices and events. For example, since IMAAM does not have its own Imam (Islamic scholar/leader), the members decided to invite someone from Indonesia to take this position. Fahmi Zubir, who graduated from Al-Azhar University in Egypt and held a position of adjunct professor of Islamic Studies at Syiah Kuala University in Aceh met the IMAAM's selection requirements and took the Imam seat at this mosque. During my fieldwork, I learned that inviting Islamic scholars later became a trend within IMAAM

Center's program. Just a few months after the mosque was inaugurated, several Muslim scholars from the homeland were invited to the mosque to give lectures. Among the famous figures who came were Yusuf Mansur and Abdullah Gymnastiar, two prominent Muslim scholars in Indonesia.

Following the increase of community activities at the mosque, more Indonesian diaspora came to this religious venue, not only for the religious practices but also to engage with other social, cultural, and even political activities held at the IMAAM Center Mosque. The increasing presence of Indonesians in the mosque has resulted in an awkward relationship between the mosque and the Indonesian Embassy. In a casual conversation with Imam Fahmi, he told me a story of when he met the Indonesian Ambassador to discuss community activities at the mosque. According to Imam Fahmi, the Ambassador jokingly said he felt a little envious with the growing number of Indonesians who came to the mosque, since they were more eager to come there than to visit the Embassy.

IMAAM, along with the presence of the IMAAM Center Mosque, has demonstrated the interplay between religious activism and transnational political lobbies. It may be true that IMAAM, both as a community center of the Indonesian Muslim diaspora and as a religious organization, had been established without any political intervention from the Indonesian government. In the past, representatives of the Indonesian Embassy were involved only in ritual or ceremonial events. Policy-making processes within IMAAM only involved the members of the community. However, once

the urgency of having an Indonesian mosque became more visible, the religious activism turned into a political lobby, mainly in an attempt to obtain financial support.

Moreover, what caught my attention was the everyday practices of the Indonesian Muslim diaspora at IMAAM Center and how they were involved in conversation about homeland politics. It was interesting to take a closer look at how these people, who initially gathered for religious reasons, eventually became caught up in discussion about contemporary politics in Indonesia. Media practices, such as consuming political news related to the homeland political sphere and circulating Indonesian politically related information to their peers were also evident during these conversations. A more detailed discussion about this matter will be presented in Chapter VI of this dissertation.

### **The Indonesian Diaspora in Los Angeles Metropolitan Area**

California has been the main destination for many Asian immigrants in the US. For instance, based on data provided by the 2000 US Census Bureau, there are at least 3,697,000 Asians who reported as affiliated to a single race or categorized as Asian 'alone', while 4,155,000 of those Asians are categorized as affiliated to more than one race or Asian 'multi-race' or 'inclusive' (US Census Bureau, 2000). Based on the same data, among the Asians in California, Filipino is counted as 25% of the total Asian population in the state, followed by Chinese for 23%, Korean for 14%, Japanese for 9%, and Indian for 6%. The remaining 22% of Asians in the state of California consists of various nationalities, such as Vietnamese, Cambodian, Thai, and Indonesian. Moreover, Cunningham (2008) estimated the Indonesian population comprises at least one percent of the Asians living in California.

In the post-Second World War period, mainly from 1945 to 1965, the transnational migrations of Indonesians from their homeland to overseas countries escalated. One of the push factors was the political turbulence situated in the Indonesian political sphere which resulted in violent conflicts throughout the country, which targeted ethnic-Chinese Indonesians along with communist supporters (Hill, 2010; Yang, 2001). Meanwhile, the US immigration policy that allowed the immigration of people from Asian countries became the pull factor of the transnational movement of Indonesians to the US at that time (Cho, 2011; Cunningham, 2008).

Following the migration patterns of other Asian groups, more than half of the total population of the Indonesian diaspora in the US resides in the state of California. According to Cunningham (2008), around three-quarters of them live in Southern California. According to a survey provided by the 2000 US Census Bureau, Southern California hosts around 13,065 Indonesians with at least 6,648 of them residing in Los Angeles County (US Census Bureau, 2000). This number is small compared to other Asian groups in the same region. However, Indonesians who live in the Los Angeles metropolitan area make up the largest Indonesian diaspora concentration in the US. Apparently, the similarity between the climate in Los Angeles and Indonesia and the already well-established Asian migrant communities in this area offer a good reason why Indonesians favor Los Angeles. An illustration of the Asian population in the Greater Los Angeles area in regards to their country of origin, including the Indonesian population is shown in the following table.

Table 5. 1.

*The Asian Population in Los Angeles Metropolitan Area*

Ethnic Group	Population	%
Chinese	473,323	3.7
Korean	304,198	2.4
Vietnamese	271,234	2.1
Other Asian groups (including Indonesian)	188,280	1.5
Japanese	134,563	1.0
Asian Indian	119,901	0.9
Total Asian Population	1,884,669	14.7
Total Population	12,828,837	

*Note.* Adapted from U. S. Census Bureau (2010a). *Asian population patterns by metro: Census 2010*. Retrieved from [http://proximityone.com/asian\\_demographics.htm](http://proximityone.com/asian_demographics.htm)

Meanwhile, the Southern California counties with the greatest populations of Indonesians in are Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Orange, and Riverside. Los Angeles County has been hosting the majority of the Indonesian population later being followed by the neighboring counties. Table 5.2 provides a breakdown of the numbers for each county.



Table 5. 2.

*The Indonesian Population in Southern California*

County	Population
Los Angeles County	13,001
San Bernardino County	6,256
Orange County	4,356
Riverside County	2,004

*Note.* Adapted from U. S. Census Bureau (2010b). *Asian American Data Links*. Retrieved from [https://www.census.gov/cic/data\\_links/asian\\_american\\_data\\_links.html](https://www.census.gov/cic/data_links/asian_american_data_links.html)

In terms of educational attainment, most (91%) of the Indonesians in Los Angeles County finished their high school education and less than half (44%) of the population earned university diplomas which illustrates that the majority of the Indonesians in this area are educated. However, around 31% of these Indonesians are reported as having a low income and 11% are living in poverty. The average annual income of Indonesians in Los Angeles is only \$22,884, far below the Caucasian Americans at \$47,503 or several other ethnic Asians, such as Thai (\$25,516), Burmese (\$27,161), Filipino (\$27,487), Korean (\$27,838) and Japanese (\$36,070) (Asian Americans Advancing Justice, 2013). Consequently, the Indonesian diaspora do not enjoy equivalent privileges in terms of economic status even within the Asian American communities in the same area. Nevertheless, the economic condition of the Indonesian diaspora in Los Angeles is far better than many people back in Indonesia. In 2014, Indonesians in the US sent \$321

million in remittances to Indonesia, in addition to the \$4 billion sent by the Indonesian diaspora worldwide (Hamedan, 2015; Pew Research Center, 2014).

### **Transnational migration pattern of Indonesians in Southern California.**

There is no precise information on who were the first Indonesian settlers in the state of California. Historians often assume that Dutch officials may have arrived in the US before the Indonesians, especially since the Dutch East Indies had already established diplomatic relationships with the Americans in the early 1900s (Gouda, 1994). Some of their native Indonesian workers may have arrived in America along with their Dutch employers before the Second World War (Balbed, 2006; Cho, 2011).

However, the *Indos*, the term used to identify people of mixed Dutch and Indonesian descent, might be considered among of the first Indonesian immigrants to the US, especially to Southern California (Brightwell, 2015; Cho, 2011;). The Indos came to this country for various reasons. After Indonesia declared its independence in 1945, the privileged position held by the Indos during the colonial period ceased to exist.

According to Greenbaum-Kasson (2011), the new Indonesian government showed a hostile attitude toward the Indos and later forced around 30,000 of them to leave the country, sending them to the Netherlands. She explained that many of these Indos had never even set foot in the Netherlands previously, since their Dutch ancestors had been living in the East Indies for decades. Greenbaum-Kasson also mentioned that facing discrimination in the Netherlands their darker skin, not purely white like the native Dutch, the Indos were eventually encouraged to leave the country and migrated to the US.

Apparently, however, the discrimination the Indos faced in the Netherlands was not the only factor causing the migration. Kwik (1989) explained that issues such as the unfriendly weather, housing problems, lack of employment and opportunities to seek a better future for their children were major considerations for the Indos' to migrate to America. It is not surprising that Southern California became their most attractive resettlement destination. Kwik mentioned that even though some Indo families had arrived in the US as early as 1946, many of them came after 1953. She further discussed how the US immigration policy at that time, mainly related to the Refugee Relief Act of 1953, enabled the Indos to immigrate in significant numbers. As a result, by the end of 1962, their number had increased to 30,000 due to various immigration acts, which provided non-quota immigrant visas to Dutch nationals. Later, in 1973, the Indos population had doubled to 60,000 (Krancher, 2003; Kwik, 1989).

The Church World Service and the Catholic Relief Service were two major sponsors responsible for the migration of the Indos to the US. A few Indo families were sponsored by their relatives or other smaller organizations (Krancher, 2003; Kwik, 1989). According to Kwik (1989), these sponsors had already prepared the local resettlement for the immigrants even before they came to the US, having communicated by mail with the sponsors in advance. In most cases, the Indos had to settle where the sponsors lived or were assigned their resettlement places, such as living with an American family. Since the sponsors were scattered throughout the country by the end of 1973, Indos could be found in most of the states in the US (Krancher, 2003). However, as mentioned by Kwik (1989), many of these immigrants later moved to urban areas to find better jobs, with

urban and industrial areas like Los Angeles and San Diego becoming the most desired places to resettle. She also argued that the Indos were better prepared to work and live in urban areas, which resonated with their previous environment in the Netherlands, and they preferred to live in a less hostile climate, such as in Southern California.

Unfortunately, an Indo ethnic enclave never materialized. Kwik (1989) suggested that if we take a closer look at the settlement patterns of the Indos, we could understand why this never happened. She explained that most of these immigrants found their resettlement places via their sponsors rather than being encouraged by the needs of having their very own ethnocentric community. Kwik further explained that a sense of individualism was exhibited by the migration patterns of the Indos. For practical reasons, the Indos tended to live near where they worked. Additionally, they had heterogeneous jobs which did not require them to gather in a specific geographical area, such as Chinatown or Korea Town. Moreover, as experienced by many immigrant groups, the US as the host country did not limit its immigrants to living in any particular part of the country (Krancher, 2003). Consequently, the Indos did not feel that the US government forbade them to reside wherever they wanted. Apparently, a similar pattern of migration applied to non-Indos Indonesian immigrants who came later to the US.

Another important group of Indonesians who came to the US are the ethnic-Chinese Indonesians. While some of them might have arrived in the country right after the Second World War, a more massive migration to the US happened in 1965 (Yang, 2001). As mentioned previously, political violence in the homeland situated around the coup attempt by the Indonesian Communist Party had a major impact to the ethnic-

Chinese Indonesians. Facing not only racial discrimination but also physical risk, many of this group fled their home country with some migrating to China or Europe, and eventually to the US (Cho, 2011). However, the presence of Chinese-descendent Indonesians in the US was relatively invisible at that time since there was no organized migration. Rather than being considered refugees, many Indonesian-Chinese who escaped the political conflict in their homeland and using their personal connections to migrate were considered migrants (Setiyawan, 2010). The later migration periods of the 1980s and the 1990s were less about political tension and more related to economic reasons (Yang, 2001), which might have involved the ethnic-Chinese Indonesian businesses as well. Moreover, an Indonesian national airway, Garuda Indonesia, had a regular flight from Jakarta to Los Angeles at that time.

Another major wave of the Indonesian-Chinese migration to the US occurred in 1998 following a massive riot in Indonesia, which again targeted the ethnic-Chinese population (Cho, 2011; Yang, 2001). In addition, Sukmana (2009) wrote the story of Victor Liem, an ethnic-Chinese Indonesian who was one of the victims of the riot. He and his family fled the country and had to leave his two companies in Jakarta. The family arrived in the US in June and sought political asylum. In some ways, Liem's story is similar to what happened to 7,000 Indonesian-Chinese in the US, many of whom were former refugees just like him. Traumatic experience in the past can be associated with the Indonesian-Chinese diaspora's reluctance to participate in the homeland's political discussion. These people's participation in the Indonesian culture and economics are relatively more prominent, such as attending cultural events held by the Indonesian

Consulate General in Los Angeles and by the Indonesian communities in the same area as well as being involved in various business-related associations like the Indonesian-American Business Council.

However, not all the ethnic-Chinese Indonesians who came to the US were refugees. Bucek Lie, one my informants in Los Angeles, said his reason to migrate to America was more economic than political. He emphasized that even the Chinese Indonesian community itself consists of a diverse diaspora, who migrated to the US for various reasons and not always for politically related causes. In order to embrace the diversity within this community, the Indonesian Chinese American Association (ICAA), founded November 9, 2001 by Fritz Hong in Duarte, attempts to unify the ethnic-Chinese Indonesian diaspora in Southern California. In more recent years, ICAA tends to be more outspoken in expressing ethnic-Chinese Indonesian diaspora opinions on Indonesian politics. For example, in June, 2014, when the KPU announced the winner of the Indonesian Presidential Election, ICAA hosted an event in Duarte to celebrate Joko Widodo's victory as the new president of the Republic of Indonesia.

The significant presence of the ethnic-Chinese Indonesian diaspora in Los Angeles and in Southern California in general, has contributed to the uneasy relationship with the native Indonesian (*pribumi*) diaspora in the same area. On one hand, the division is visible back in Indonesia as well as in diaspora. In diaspora, on the other hand, there is a tendency for these people to imagine themselves as *orang Indonesia* (Indonesian people) rather than considering themselves as part of particular ethnic or religious groups, such as Indonesian Muslims, Indonesian Christians, Indonesian Bataks, or Indonesian

Javanese. The Indonesian-Chinese (predominantly Christian) have outnumbered the native Indonesians or other ethno-religious groups (predominantly Muslims in the diaspora); thus, the issue of unity in diversity has become problematic for the Indonesian diaspora in the Greater Los Angeles area.

Compared to the ethnic-Chinese Indonesians, there are relatively few detailed records on the demography of the Indonesian *pribumi* diaspora. Benny, a staff member at the Indonesian Consulate General, told me that there is a diversity in the Indonesian diaspora in Los Angeles in terms of their ethnicity and place of origin, such as Bataks, Minahasans, Javanese and Minang. During my visit, I found only a few native Indonesian ethnic-related formal associations, such as *Ikatan Masyarakat Batak di California* (the Association for Batak People in California, IMABAC), *Paguyuban Jawa Plus* (the Association for Javanese Plus) and *MAESA* for the Indonesian diaspora from Minahasa. IMABAC was founded in the 1980s and was joined by hundreds of Batak people around Los Angeles. Unfortunately, according to Cunningham (2008), the increasing number of Batak immigrants in the Los Angeles had a negative impact on this association since too many people preferred to gather with their fellow clans rather than with their fellow ethnic diaspora.

*Paguyuban Jawa Plus* is a relatively new association, which targets the Javanese diaspora as its members. Founded in 2008 by David Mulyatno, this ethnic association in diaspora numbers around 500 Javanese Indonesians in the Los Angeles area and is locally oriented in its community activities. MAESA, which had been present as early as the 1970s, has grown to become one of the largest ethnic associations for the Minahasan

diaspora in Southern California and current members have already spread to different states in the US.

**Their very own Indonesian media.** Due to the need to obtain the most updated information of the homeland, Indonesian media in diaspora came into existence. *De Indo*, a publication printed by the Indos in Walnut, California, was present as early as 1963, mainly functioning as the official voice of an Indo association, *De Soos*. Since most of the articles are written in Dutch or English, to target the Indo readers in diaspora as well as the Netherlands, it is difficult to consider it as Indonesian diaspora media. Probably, the Fontana-based magazine *Indonesian Journal*, which had its first publication in 1988, should be counted as the first Indonesian diaspora media. *Indonesian Journal* was founded by Emile Mailangkay, who serves as the leader of the Northern Sulawesi diaspora community in the US, *MAESA*. According to Brown (1994), this monthly publication circulated at least 70,000 copies each month, and its publication reached the Indonesian diaspora readers beyond the state of California. In order to cope with the digital era, in 2012 *Indonesian Journal* provided an online version. Most articles are written in *Bahasa Indonesia* with the focus on events happening in Indonesia as well as on people and organizations in diaspora. In addition to providing news on social and cultural issues, some reports on various political-related events are included in *Indonesian Journal*.

Providing news about Indonesia as well as the Indonesian diaspora, a biweekly newspaper, *Actual Indonesia News*, was first published in August 1996. The articles are mainly in the Indonesian language although some are written in English. Founded by one



Batak Indonesian diasporan, Karimin E. Sianipar, who immigrated to the US in the early 1990s. He later became a church activist and is well known as the founder of the first Batak-affiliated church in the US. Circulated mainly in the Southern California region, *Actual Indonesian News* has its main office in Loma Linda, San Bernardino County.

A more recent publication in diaspora is *Indonesia Media*, which is based in Glendora, California. Founded in 1998 by several Indonesian-Chinese groups, this monthly published its first issue in February, 1999. On its website, the editors state that the publication was initially founded in response to the ethnic conflict in May, 1998, in Indonesia, which was seen as discriminating against ethnic-Chinese Indonesians. It wanted to become a ‘watchdog’ for any discrimination and violent events occurring in the homeland (“Indonesia Media,” n.d.). Started in February, 2004, *Indonesia Media* became a biweekly publication of 64 pages per issue with an average circulation of 15,000 to 18,000 copies and is widely circulated throughout the country. The paper has contributors from various states, such as Pennsylvania, Idaho, Tennessee, and from Washington, D. C., as well as from different countries like Canada, the Netherlands, Singapore, and Australia. Compared to other Indonesian diaspora media, *Indonesia Media* is more active in providing political news to the diaspora. As noted earlier, since the May Riot in 1998 was the main impetus of the publication, *Indonesia Media* tends to be more vocal in expressing the diaspora’s opinions of the contemporary socio-political conditions of the homeland.

*Kabari*, a San Francisco-based Indonesian diaspora medium, has opened an office in La Habra, Los Angeles. Although *Kabari* was targeting Indonesian diaspora in

Northern California as its initial primary readers, it seems that it is very difficult to ignore the significant presence of Indonesians in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. Published as a monthly magazine, *Kabari* was only founded in 2007 but could publish at least 10,000 copies each month. The growing number of readers has made *Kabari* available not only for the Indonesian diaspora in San Francisco and Los Angeles, but also beyond California, and has even been distributed in several countries like the Netherlands and Australia. Vincent Leebong-Lie, on the advisory boards of *Kabari*, once referred to his publication as ‘ethnic media’ rather than ‘diaspora media.’ For practical reasons, he later embraced the idea of diaspora media since the main purpose of the publication is to provide an exchange of information between Indonesians in diaspora and their fellows in the homeland. While *Indonesia Media* tends to be more outspoken in giving political news to its audience, *Kabari* tries to be more selective in dealing with political matters. According to *Kabari*’s publisher, John Oei, even though in the print version *Kabari* tends to be less political, the online version has more flexibility in providing a space for political discussion for its audience. For instance, in the period since the Indonesian Presidential Election in 2014, *Kabari* has hosted several online discussions to provide comments on the contemporary political situations in Indonesia. Guest speakers from Indonesia as well as from diaspora were invited to the online discussion and the audience could join the conversation.

**The diasporic public space and transnational activism.** In Los Angeles, the Indonesian government representative manifests in the presence of the Indonesian Consulate General Office, located at 3457 Wilshire Boulevard. At some points, the

Consulate acts as a diasporic space for the Indonesian community in Los Angeles. Having a role similar to that of the Indonesian Embassy in Washington, D. C., the Consulate General Office has a primary duty to disseminate Indonesian government policy in addition to serving the needs of the Indonesian community in Southern California. In terms of political activity, the Consulate General in Los Angeles also holds the responsibility of appointing the members of PPLN, who are recruited from members of the Indonesian diaspora in addition to one or two Consulate staff members. Subsequently, PPLN in Los Angeles coordinates with the PPLN in Washington, D. C. to organize the Indonesian election in Southern California. The voting is held in the Consulate office and those already registered in the voters list issued by the KPU are invited to come. However, if they cannot make it to the Consulate on voting day, although the election tends to be held on the weekend, they are allowed to send the ballots by mail to the PPLN.

Several other services provided by the Consulate, such as consular services, are equivalent to the works of the Indonesian Embassy in Washington, D. C. From my observation, even though the Consulate office is relatively smaller than the Embassy mansion in the capital, more Indonesians visit the Consulate in Los Angeles than the Embassy in Washington, D. C. During my time at the Consulate, I could find at least 20 people in line waiting in front of the consular service office, either to obtain travel a permit or just to renew their passports. I also found the interaction between the Consulate staff and the Indonesians to be more dynamic than the one that I previously saw in the Embassy in Washington, D. C.

In addition, a closer examination of how the Consulate approaches the Indonesian diaspora community in Los Angeles is important in understanding its role in ‘transnationalism from above’ practices. The newly appointed Consul-General, Umar Hadi is a famous figure within the Indonesian diaspora community in Los Angeles, and he is seen as an industrious person who enthusiastically promotes Indonesian business partnerships between business players in both countries. In May, 2015, he was awarded a Diversity Visionary Award by the Pacific Trade and Culture Alliance for his achievement in promoting unity within the diverse Indonesian diaspora in Los Angeles (Santosa, 2015). The role of the Consulate General has since become more significant. During my fieldwork, the Indonesian Consulate organized several government-led community events in the office in an attempt to encourage the diaspora’s engagement with the Consulate. For instance, the Consulate office was joined by the members of the Indonesian American Business Council to discuss the prospect of business cooperation between the Indonesian diaspora and the industry leaders in the home country with a few speakers from Indonesia invited to the discussion.

A number of cultural and religious community activities were organized by the Indonesian Consulate. In December, 2014, on behalf of the Consulate, Umar Hadi invited members of the Indonesian Christian diaspora to celebrate Christmas at Consul-General’s residence, (which is also called *Wisma Indonesia*) at 627 Windsor Boulevard. Similarly, during Islamic holidays, such as *Idul Fitri*, the Consul-General usually holds an open house and invites Indonesian Muslims in the Los Angeles area. Invitations of this type, of

a cultural approach by the government's representative, aims to develop a mutual relationship between the home country and its people in diaspora.

Nevertheless, rather than waiting for the Indonesian diaspora to come to the Consulate, on various occasions the Consulate staff has taken the initiative to be proactively involved in community activities held by the diaspora. The Indonesian diaspora in Los Angeles have their own sociocultural activities which they arranged themselves, and later they invited the government representative to come to give some kinds of *restu* (blessings) to the event. For example, one of the staff members showed me a copy of an invitation to the Indonesian Ambassador to attend the Indonesian National Independence Day celebration held by the Indonesian Diaspora Network of Greater Los Angeles at Filipino Multipurpose Building in Redland, San Bernardino County. Later, on February 28, 2015, Ambassador Budi Bowoleksono was joined by Umar Hadi to participate in *Imlek* (Chinese Lunar New Year) Celebration organized by the ICAA in Hacienda Heights. In this sense, the relationship between the Indonesian diaspora and the home country could sometimes be initiated by the diaspora. Therefore, this practice could be interpreted as 'transnationalism from below.'

Unfortunately, the physical ethnic enclave of the Indonesian diaspora in Los Angeles has yet to emerge despite the increasing population. There is no such place like Korea Town, Chinatown, or Little Japan for the Indonesian diaspora. As a result, other than the Consulate General, the physical diaspora public space is almost non-existent. For many Indonesian diaspora, in order to organize a mass gathering as well as to host a community event, they have to rent community centers from other communities, such as

the Filipino community center in Hacienda Heights. This has made more regular and fixed-schedule community meetings troublesome. To some extent, it might also influence the sense of unity among this diverse diaspora population in the Greater Los Angeles area.

Apparently, religious sites and places of worship are considered as a fixed space for the Indonesian diaspora to gather on a more regular basis. For the Indonesian Christian diaspora, the role of the church becomes significant since it allows them to meet face-to-face with fellow nationals, especially those who are in the same congregation. As mentioned by Cunningham (2008), in Southern California, there were 41 Indonesian Protestant and two Catholic congregations back in 1998, and the number had increased to 82 congregations scattered in 48 cities in this region in 2003. Because most of them do not have their own church building, they have to rent another building for prayer, to share the church with other congregations, or even for Bible studies at the homes of their members. As in the case of the Indonesian Muslim diaspora, the Consulate General lends them one big room on the lower level of the building for a prayer room as well as an Islamic Sunday school for the children.

Although they mainly function as religious support systems, congregations have been contributing to the political participation of the Indonesian diaspora with the homeland politics. During the 2014 Indonesian National Election, the Indonesian Christian Minahasan congregation in Southern California was encouraged by their community leaders to be active in promoting one particular Indonesian political party, the Great Indonesia Movement Party (*Partai Gerakan Indonesian Raya*, Gerindra), which

has a significant number of party members from North Sulawesi. From my conversations with several members of the Minahasan diaspora, they proudly said that they support a particular political party and presidential candidate, but also said the unity among the members of the Indonesian diaspora is the most important thing for them. They thought it was unfortunate that there was a division within the community, even within the same congregation, caused by differences in political preference.

### **Trans-Local Connections Between the Indonesian Diaspora in Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles**

Some of my informants reported that in the past, various trans-local connections between the Indonesian diaspora living in different states in the US were situated in informal and less institutionalized forms. Based on their experience, their cross-state interactions at that time were made by personal communication between individuals and families scattered in various locales. For example, Andre and his wife, two of my informants, spent their early days in the US back in the late 1980s living with their aunt in San Francisco, but later decided to live with their relatives in Northern Virginia. They relied on personal contacts during this resettlement period without any direct help from the Indonesian government's representatives. Just as in the case of the Indos who initially settled on the East Coast but later moved to more weather-friendly locations on the West Coast, their moves were made more comfortable by personal communication between the members of diaspora. A similar example happened with Daniel, an ethnic-Chinese Indonesian who originally lived in Southern Philadelphia but later moved to Fairfax,

Northern Virginia, since he had heard from friends already living there informing him that the new place might offer better job opportunities for Indonesian diaspora.

In the following years, Indonesian government representatives in several major cities began to be proactive in providing assistance to Indonesian diaspora. To some extent, the homeland government representatives' presence exemplifies the trans-local interaction between the members of the Indonesian diaspora in America, mainly when their works are related to promoting communications between the Indonesian people and businesses in various states in the US. In several cases, the Indonesian Embassy staff needed to coordinate with their coworkers at the Indonesian consulate offices in different states. In one example, the Embassy's Pensosbud staff, Mukti, had to accompany Ambassador Bowoleksono to attend an invitation from ICAA to celebrate the Chinese Lunar New Year in Los Angeles in February 2015. In doing so, he had to communicate in advance with the staff members at the consulate in Los Angeles as well as the diaspora community that organized the event, just to make sure the visit would be well-prepared. Emails, *Skype* talks, and phone calls between people at both locations were invaluable to performing this kind of trans-local cooperation.

However, it can be argued that the most notable materialization of the trans-local connection between Indonesian diaspora in Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles, and even global, came at the historical event of the very first Indonesian Diaspora Convention, held in Los Angeles in July, 2012. According to Fardah (2013), 2,056 people attended this gathering. Through this convention, Indonesian diaspora who had scattered throughout the world connected, got to know each other and further collaboration in



various sectors. Within this meeting, the formal global association for the Indonesian diaspora was formed, which later named the Indonesian Diaspora Network (IDN). Following the event, more local chapters of the IDN were founded by the Indonesian diaspora communities in various places including the Greater Los Angeles area. Even though the trans-local connections became more materialized and institutionalized, this did not diminish the personal communication that happened at the grass roots level.

The declaration of the IDN in Los Angeles should also be seen as one of the most important moments for the formal transnational participation of the Indonesian diaspora with the homeland, it related to the politics, socio-economics, education, or culture. Initiated by the diaspora, but later formally embraced by the Indonesian government through the Indonesian Ambassador at that time, Dino Patti Djalal, this institution aims to connect the diaspora and also encourage them to contribute to the homeland. At this moment, the Indonesian government has opened the possibility of welcoming ideas, comments, and even criticism, from the Indonesian diaspora, mainly through the government's recognition of IDN.

Nevertheless, IDN was never intended to replace the existing Indonesian diaspora organizations and associations, since many of them already have their own established members. At some point, IDN can be seen as the intermediary between the members of diaspora and the Indonesian government for various matters. Since IDN is non-political in nature, the participation of Indonesian diaspora in political issues may not really be accommodated by IDN. However, to minimize IDN's role in creating the networks not only among the diaspora in different locales in the US, but also with people back home, it

would not be helpful to better understanding the nature of transnational activism of the Indonesian diaspora. Both the role of IDN and the grass roots should be seen as important and relevant.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I have discussed the socio-cultural environment of the Indonesian diaspora communities in both the Greater Washington, D. C. area and the Los Angeles area in addition to the overview of their modes of displacement. Due to the differences in migration reasons and routes, many of the Indonesian diaspora resettled in various places in the US, with the Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles metropolitan areas being two distinctive locales where these diaspora decided to reside. The demographic characteristics of the Indonesian diaspora in these two locales also illustrate the similarities and the differences between the populations in these two metropolitan areas. While Indonesian-Chinese diaspora are dominant in Los Angeles, this ethnic group is less visible in Washington D. C.

The presence of the Indonesian Embassy in Washington, D. C., to some extent, has contributed to the increasing role of the homeland government's representative in enabling transnational practices of Indonesians in this area, and thus, can be seen as an exercise of 'transnationalism from above.' Indonesian community centers, like the IMAAM mosque, have been considered as sites to practice 'transnationalism from below,' when various diasporic community activities, both local-oriented and homeland-oriented materialized. Similarly, in Los Angeles, the role of the Indonesian government was visible, mainly due to the assistance of the Indonesian Consulate in diaspora

community events. Additionally, the availability of Indonesian diaspora media within the community has not only encouraged the circulation of information within the community but also fostered dissemination of news from the homeland to diaspora. In addition, Indonesian diaspora media also provide an intriguing case for how the Indonesian diaspora can participate in the homeland's political sphere. Finally, the presence of IDN as the vehicle for the Indonesian diaspora to connect with their fellow nationals, not only in different states in the US but also back in Indonesia, should be seen as promising since it attempts to bridge the trans-local cooperation among diaspora. While IDN has this potential, a more concrete collaboration between the members of diaspora in Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles was only visible during the inauguration of the first Congress of Indonesian Diaspora in Los Angeles back in 2012. Further actions are still in question. Moreover, despite the increasing role of an institutionalized Indonesian diaspora trans-local communication like IDN, personal contact and communication have been found no less than important than ever.

## **Chapter VI: Diasporic Media Use and Homeland Political Participation**

In understanding the nature of diasporic media use and how it is associated with their engagement with the homeland political sphere, it is important to incorporate several issues. This chapter focuses on the following four issues. First, it explores the diaspora media use in everyday practice. This will include discussion of how the diaspora use several media platforms, such as television, print media and online media, from their most mundane activities to the more serious and active use of the media like seeking political news and information. This section also examines their media preferences and how these preferences may change depending on circumstances. Primary attention will be given to how members of diaspora experienced the host country's media, especially in terms of their consumption of popular media content like American television series. Providing this information at the beginning will be beneficial in understanding the diaspora's general attitude toward both the host land and the homeland media, the latter of which will be further explored in subsequent sections. As encouraged by Georgiou's (2006) study, most of the diaspora are practicing the 'dual-nature' of media consumption, which means the use of homeland media should be seen as parallel to the use of host land and mainstream media; thus, they exhibit the mixture and dualism of the diaspora media use in general. Therefore, in providing this information, placing host land media use as the foreground of the Indonesian diaspora's homeland media consumption should be seen as necessary in understanding the diaspora's general media behavior.

Secondly, a significant portion of the discussion of the relationship between the Indonesian diaspora in both Washington, D. C. and in the Los Angeles metropolitan area

and the homeland media will be given in the second part of this chapter. This section will be used to illustrate how homeland media are used and in what context, as well as which factors have most motivated these displaced audiences to consume media content from their country of origin. The practice of consuming news of the homeland political sphere is the most important topic in the third section of this chapter. This discussion includes the combination of media consumption with other factors, such as preexisting Indonesian diaspora's attitude toward politics in general, and their impression of Indonesian contemporary politics as well as their perception of Indonesian media. This will lead into the exploration of why these diaspora decided to engage with their homeland politics. It is also critical to include within this examination some of the structural and personal barriers that could limit the Indonesian diaspora's participation in the home country's politics through political news consumption.

The last part of the chapter is devoted to discussion related to the role of social media in enabling further consumption of homeland media content, especially in the context of the Indonesian diaspora's engagement with Indonesian politics in everyday life. As noted by Plaza and Below (2014), the emergence of social media, such as Facebook, YouTube and Skype has encouraged the transnational connections of the diaspora with people and events in their home country. In the case of the Indonesian diaspora, social media further stimulate not only passive consumption of the Indonesian political news but also involvement in various politics-related activisms. In addition, due to the increasing popularity among the Indonesian diaspora of online instant messenger services, such as *Blackberry Messenger* and *WhatsApp*, this study suggests that this kind

of online personal communication medium acts as an alternative form of mediatized diaspora's participation in the exchange of political information of the home country from Indonesia to diaspora and vice versa.

### **Diaspora Media Use in Everyday Practice**

**Television in the diaspora's living room.** Andre has been living in the US for more than 25 years. He married his Indonesian wife in Washington, D. C. back in 1989 and now has three children. All of his children consider America their home since they were born here. In fact, they are all American citizens. Moreover, though both Andre's parents are living in the US—having migrated here before he and his siblings did—and even though he still holds his Indonesian passport, Andre reported that he did not care much about considering Indonesia his homeland. He mentioned that his preference for American media content was the result of his living in this country for the past two decades. “I just get used to American television. There's so much interesting programming,” he explained. Andre's media behavior supports his claim about preferring American media content, especially television shows.

One summer afternoon, when Andre returned home from work, the clock on the wall pointed its fingers to four and six. He had just finished his shift, an eight-hour stint from 5 a.m. to 3 p.m.. It took almost an hour to drive from his office in Bethesda to his home. He put his car key on the desk by the kitchen and hung up his cap. He turned on the coffee maker, grabbed from the fridge some Indonesian traditional spicy beef curry (beef *rendang*) his wife had cooked the day before and reheated it in the microwave. After the food was ready Andre sat down on the living room couch with it. While eating

his late-lunch, he turned on the television and after switching some channels, he finally decided to watch the latest episode of *The Strain*, his favorite television series. It was a rerun of a show he was unable to watch the previous day when he took a night shift at work. “I have been waiting for this new season since last year, so, I did not want to miss a single episode of this second season,” he declared. Andre tried his best not to miss the series although his working shift issue sometimes prevents him watching it. Fortunately, his cable service, *Xfinity*, allows him to watch reruns of most of the television series available in the service.

A very gregarious person, Andre usually invites his fellow Indonesian diaspora, friends and relatives to his house to watch the series with him. One evening when relatives came for a visit he asked, “Have you watched this series? It’s thrilling!” “Not yet. But sure, I can try to watch. What is it all about?” the guest replied. There is an impression that Andre, in his fifties, is way more updated about the latest American television series than the average Indonesian diaspora. Moreover, it would be uncommon for a guy his age back in Indonesia to exhibit such knowledge of television content. Meanwhile, the guest, a few years younger than Andre, had been struggling to catch up with Andre’s favorite TV show, being less interested, but not having possession of the control.

The following day, Melly, one of Andre’s daughters, woke up from a nap and enjoyed her summer break by doing nothing at home. Like her father, she had a special fondness for American television shows. Whenever she switched on the TV, she usually tuned in to the Disney channel, to watch Zendaya’s sitcom, *K. C. Undercover*. But when

the older sister, Astrid, who is studying public health at the University of Maryland, came home, they watched *Grey's Anatomy* instead. During the school year, Melly usually spent one to two hours per day watching TV. That day, after only watching less than an hour of her show her father came home from his work. Then the fight started over what television channel to watch.

“Melly, can you switch the channel? It’s my turn to watch the TV,” the father said. Andre argued that late afternoon is his usual schedule to watch his favorite series. He accused Melly of spending too much time in front of the TV. “No way, I just turned on the TV not so long ago,” she defended herself. When her father refused to trust her, she insisted, “I just woke up from my nap.” Her father complained that he already missed the initial screening from the night before and wanted to catch up with the rerun. She refused his request to switch the channel. Andre gave up and went upstairs and later watched the series in his room using his tablet, although he continued to complain, “This tablet’s screen is too small for such television shows. I prefer a wider screen with a better sound speaker.”

This scene provides a brief illustration of the nature of diaspora’s media use in a typical, everyday life, context. Like many other diaspora families’ relationship with television (Georgiou, 2006, 2012; Rinnawi, 2012), there is also a tendency for the Indonesian diaspora to develop a fondness for television is developing a strategic position within the Indonesian diaspora’s homes. Being in the living room, it becomes the center of the activities of the family when they gather there. However, the question remains, despite the strategic position owned by the television, why is it not always accessible for



the diaspora? To answer this question, a closer examination of the nature, as well as the motives, of television usage need to be included within the discussion of the Indonesian diaspora's use of television.

Presumably, the motives of the Indonesian diaspora for using media like television are closely related to why this particular medium may not always be available to them. In terms of motivation for media use, members of the Indonesian diaspora follow the general assumptions of American media use, which is more ritual than instrumental. As shown in the above scenario, television watching was more a ritual activity, especially when the set is turned on immediately someone comes in the door. For many of the informants, television was always available, but the problem was that they might not always able to watch what or when they wanted. In most cases, the Indonesian diaspora only watched TV in their leisure time. Apparently, time was one of the major constrains for these diasporic audiences to access television. Moreover, as with other immigrant groups, many in the Indonesian diaspora are likely to have more than one job, which would dramatically decrease their leisure time and so the time spent watching television also decreases. The only time they could watch television was after working hours, which vary depending on their work shift. When Andre took the early morning shift, he could access television as early as three o'clock in the afternoon. However, when he worked an afternoon shift, it was more likely than he could only watch late-night television or even decide not to watch television at all.

A similar story was shared by Bucek, one of the diasporans in Los Angeles. He said, "I have never considered myself a frequent television viewer. " Coming to the US as

an economic migrant back in the early 2000s, he has been working for a small venture into the export-import business. Bucek spent most of his daytime at work and came home in the late evening. He explained that just like him, most members of the Indonesian diaspora in Los Angeles are busy with their daytime jobs, thus their access to television is limited. “We don’t really have much time to watch TV,” he argued, “only three to four hours per day.” However, when they have time for television, they preferred content broadcast from the host country since American television channels offer more interesting programs compared to Indonesian channels. In Bucek’s own words, “... since American channels are already ‘great,’ I become less interested in watching Indonesian channels.” Obviously, there is a similarity between Bucek and Andre in terms of their decision to watch television as well as their preference for American TV content. Both of them enjoyed watching the host country’s television because it was more entertaining.

Since television was more widely used by Indonesian diaspora within the ritual motive, there was also a tendency for entertainment content to be preferred over information or news-related content. As reported by Bucek, “once they came home from work, Indonesian diasporans would not really want to be bothered with something serious.” In the need for relaxation in the after-hours period, they preferred entertainment to news. Similar to Andre and Bucek, many informants proudly said they follow American popular television shows. In conversations with other members of the Indonesia diaspora, they made some comments on the latest episodes of popular television series, such as the HBO’s *Game of Thrones*, AMC’s *The Walking Dead*, or Andre’s favorite series, *The Strain*. In order to be able to participate in such discussions

with their fellow nationals or their American friends, most Indonesians in diaspora would be highly encouraged to follow television shows on a regular basis. Fortunately, they can still watch the rerun if they missed the initial on-air time of the series, thanks to the availability of the services provided by the cable channels or streaming services like *Netflix* and *Hulu*.

It was less surprising that members of the Indonesian diaspora could fully catch up with the American popular media culture, especially those in the first generation of the diaspora. The flow of American popular media content has long spread to many parts of the world, including Asian countries like Indonesia. Back in Indonesia, despite the government's control over foreign media content, the first generation diasporans said they had already watched a variety of American media products. Going to the cinema to watch American movies was a trend during their time in Indonesia, in addition to the fact that Indonesian television channels were screening many American television series as early as the 1980s. *Dallas*, *Gone with the Wind*, *The A-Team*, and *MacGyver* were popular among the older generations. I recalled my own experience watching some of these programs with my father on our black and white television back in the early 1990s. Meanwhile, the younger ones were more familiar with *Dawson's Creek* and *Friends*. The first generation diasporans try to maintain their preexisting attitude toward American popular media, mainly by watching television shows when they are available. Meanwhile, the second generation of Indonesian diasporans like Melly and Astrid have developed a fondness for American television since they were born in this country, are growing up with American media, and have American friends who discuss the popular

television show as part of their daily conversations. No wonder these second generation overseas Indonesians are native to the American popular media, and watch channels like *Disney, Cartoon Network, and Nickelodeon*, on a more regular basis compared to the elder generation. This generation gap will eventually differentiate their preferences toward diaspora-homeland media.

The use of television as a source of information was also evident in some Indonesian diaspora households. While in general the amount of time spent watching television in search of news has been low, in several cases television became the most important medium for the Indonesian diaspora to obtain the latest condition of events or issues, especially as related to their work in the US. For instance, during the winter some Indonesian families watch local newscasts for the latest road conditions in their areas, to make sure that they could avoid traffic jams caused by snow. In severe conditions, the newscasts provide information about whether offices and schools have been closed because of bad weather.

One winter morning with Ahmad's family, Dody had already prepared to go to his office before her wife called him, "Dad, can you please turn on the television and check the news about the weather conditions? I heard that some schools and office buildings were closed due to the heavy snow." As Dody turned on the TV, the news reporter was broadcasting about the heavy pile-up of snow that had caused closure of many buildings in Montgomery Country, including some in the Rockville area where Dody's office is located. "I don't think I can go to the office today. But I'll call my boss first to confirm," he told his wife. The running text on the TV screen displayed information about the local

government having announced the closure of schools and public offices. The kids were happy since they did not have to go to school, and went outside to play with their snowboard instead.

A more serious engagement of the Indonesian diaspora with the television news happened in one prominent case. On November 20, 2014, President Obama made a televised announcement about his decision concerning the immigration issue in the US. His executive order has resulted in the government's decision to not automatically deport undocumented immigrants in this country, which later gained support from many undocumented immigrants including Indonesians in the US. Since this matter also had a significant influence on the legal status of undocumented Indonesians, they paid close attention to the broadcast.

Just as in another Indonesian diaspora household, Andre's family was interested in watching Obama's announcement. On that particular day, Andre's wife turned on the television in the TV room to *CNN*, right after she came home from work, a little bit earlier than usual. When asked about this, she explained, "I've been ready for Obama's speech about his immigration policy this evening, so I came home from the office early." Her husband came home 15 minutes later. "Do you remember that today Obama will announce his decision about the immigration policy?" she asked Andre. "Oh, is it today?" he gave her a short reply as he came in and then moved to the kitchen looking for his dinner.

They had to wait for half an hour before the President's speech was broadcast. Andre's wife frequently nagged her husband to watch the broadcast with her. "Andre,

please come here. Hurry, the speech is going to be broadcasted soon,” she called her husband, who was finishing his dinner, to join her in front of the television. Later on, they watched quietly and paid full attention to the speech. They made comments only after the speech was over. “I think Obama’s decision is right. It is not fair to send back home those undocumented immigrants, unless they’re criminals, especially many of them have been living in America for years,” Andre gave his analysis. “Yeah, but it won’t do much help since many undocumented Indonesians were hoping for an amnesty from Obama. This means they won’t be able to obtain the green card anyway,” she offered him her opinion. The couple does not frequently talk about politics, or even watches politics-related television content. This was the rarest of circumstances in this family when both the husband and wife could watch the news on an American television channel together. This particular situation was never recurred in the following months of my fieldwork.

Nevertheless, television is one of the most common reasons for the diaspora family to gather around the media. As mentioned previously, having a television set in the living room, has enabled them to create a family bond in front of it. It is true that there might be tension in terms of what they want to watch, as with Andre and his daughter, but most of the time the parents tend to compromise with their children’s option for the television. It is not unusual for an Indonesian diaspora family to watch American television shows when they gather with their children. In contrast, it would be less likely to see all of them watching Indonesian television together. The issue is, not many second or third generations of the Indonesian diaspora are able to speak or to understand the Indonesian language. As a result, it is most likely the children would leave

since they might feel either uncomfortable with or disconnected from the Indonesian television channels their parents watched.

**Print media: Still present but becoming less relevant.** Dewi has been working at the Indonesian Embassy for almost two decades. As ‘local staff’, she has been working there longer period than her colleagues, especially those diplomats who received their appointments directly from the Indonesian Foreign Ministry in Jakarta. These diplomats, usually nicknamed ‘home staff’, hold their positions from three to five years. Indonesian diplomats in Washington, D. C. tend to be less involved in clerical duties, and rely more on technical support from the embassy’s local staff, like Dewi. She explained that members of the Indonesian diaspora who work at the Embassy but who are not considered as diplomats are called local staff. “We do the smaller and clerical duties but it does not mean that our jobs are less important,” she insisted. For local staff like her, having the advantage of living in the US longer than their diplomat colleagues has given them a more distinctive role in the office, especially if the work is related to the Indonesian diaspora. When asked why she loves her Embassy job she replied, “I can meet with many Indonesians here, especially when I was assigned to engage with the diaspora communities. I prefer to meet people rather than spend the whole time behind my desk.”

One morning in October, 2014, she thought she had arrived late to work. Her office in the Pensosbud division of the Embassy is located on the third floor of the annex building and is rather small though not crowded since not many staff members work in this division. It only has three home staff people, in addition to two local staff, Dewi and Isti, another Indonesian-American female. Dewi told me that one of her duties at

Pensosbud is to reach out to the public, not only Americans but also the Indonesian diaspora community. In doing so, she has to engage with various community events, held by the diaspora as well as more official events hosted by several American communities. One time she was assigned to organize a bazaar for the Indonesian diaspora in the Greater Washington, D. C. area and another time she was appointed to promote Indonesian cuisine to local schools and colleges. Apart from this kind of assignment, she spends her work hours doing administrative work.

On the morning in question, Dewi was one of the earliest employees to arrive. Hers was the first car was the first one in the parking lot. When asked whether it is uncommon for people to come at this hour, she replied, “The office hours start at 9am, but most employees arrive a little bit late, even the big boss.” “It is part of the Indonesian culture of *jam karet* (rubber time),” she added in a satirical voice. As she entered the Embassy, greeted the security guard and took the elevator to the third floor where her office is located, she stopped at the first table near her cubicle. Dewi took a look at a pile of newspapers and after checking the dates she took several copies. Many government offices back in Indonesia provide the latest morning edition of local newspapers to be read by the employees and this practice was followed by the Indonesian Embassy in Washington.

However, rather than enjoying this morning activity, Dewi expressed her disinterest with the papers. She later complained, “I don’t really like to work on Monday mornings.” Every Monday, she was required to read the newspapers from the weekend, in addition to the Monday edition. So this day, she needed to read nine copies of the



paper, the Saturday, Sunday and Monday editions of three major newspapers, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and the *New York Post*.

Reading these newspapers was one of her first assignments every morning. After taking the newspapers, she dropped her Michael Kors handbag at her cubicle, turned on her computer, got a cup of coffee and took a chair near the round table in the center of the room. While scanning the papers, she would stop at interesting topics. Recently, she monitored news about the ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham). “Nowadays, ISIS is becoming more violent, don’t you think?” she once asked other people about this topic. She explained that her boss asked her to read the latest updates on any news related to ISIS and to try to find any connection with Indonesia. “How come he asked me to understand this complicated conflict?” she asked herself. Once she finished reading each article, she would need to write a short review about the topic for her boss. She would read any mainstream newspaper articles related to Indonesia and report accordingly.

Despite their decreasing importance, newspapers were still visible with the Indonesian diaspora during my fieldwork. However, like the illustration above, newspaper readership happened in the workplace context and is mostly absent from the home environment. Apparently, due to the seriousness of the newspaper articles, some Indonesian diaspora considered reading them a work-related activity. These people found reading newspapers too difficult to get any enjoyment from them. For instance, at a local Barnes & Noble bookstore in Rockville, Maryland, two young Indonesian diasporans preferred to stop at the magazine section and did not even look at the newspaper stall. One chose a magazine with Morrissey’s cover. “My Morrissey’s biography just arrived

last week, “ one of them proudly explained. They said they still like to read, but not newspapers.

This irony was apparent with some members of the Indonesian diaspora who worked as newspaper delivery drivers. The Indonesian diaspora called this job *ngoran*, which means delivering the newspapers. It is famous in the Washington, D. C. metropolitan area, especially for Indonesians who do not have official working authorizations like social security numbers since this job does not require such a permit. One of the drivers, an informant for this project, shared his story:

I usually need to go to bed early, around 11PM, since I also have to wake up early in the morning, around 3AM, to pick up the newspaper pile at the nearest newspaper distributor. Afterwards, I have to deliver the newspapers to the designated subscribers, usually in the area nearest where I live, but sometimes I need to go as far as Bethesda, near Washington, D. C. The newspapers need to arrive as early as 6am, so the customers can read the paper while eating breakfast.  
(personal communication, October 19, 2014)

The irony is, newspaper delivery drivers like him would not have been able to read the newspapers they delivered to the customers, either because the drivers are not subscribers those newspapers or they just simply do not like to read any newspapers. One morning just after he had finished his delivery job, he offered the extra papers for free, “I still have some copies of *the Washington Post* and *the New York Times* in my backseat. You can take them with you if you want.”

Other than newspapers, magazines are one of the print media still considered significant among the Indonesian diaspora, in both the Washington, D. C. and the Los Angeles metropolitan areas. As previously mentioned, Indonesians occasionally visit local bookstores for various reasons. They might just want to take a look at the newest publications, with a few of them deciding to buy some books or magazines. In the case of magazines, the Indonesian diaspora in Los Angeles have the advantage of having a relatively moderate number of Indonesian-related publications. The presence of diaspora media, such as *Indonesia Media* and *Kabari*, has offered them easy access to print media to obtain the latest information about their home country as well as other diaspora activities. In addition, these diaspora magazines are placed by the distributors in various community centers and in other public spaces frequently visited by the Indonesian diaspora, such as the Indonesian Consulate Office, Asian grocery stores, Indonesian churches, and Indonesian restaurants.

For instance, at one local Indonesian restaurant in Alhambra, Los Angeles, the owner provided Indonesian diaspora magazines for the restaurant patrons. Being placed at a small rack near the entrance, not too far from the cashier, made the magazines difficult for the customers to ignore. “We put the magazines there so people can have them or read them if they want, and its free anyway,” said the owner. In most cases, Indonesians who came to this place took one or two copies of the magazine if they were interested in the publication. Generally, there were three types of the readers of this diaspora media: those who took the magazine and read it right away while waiting for their order at the restaurant; those who picked up the magazine to read later at home; or

people who took a quick glance at the publication, read some articles and put the magazine back on the shelf. The second and the third categories were more frequent than the first. Presumably, the television set in the restaurant, showing news on the Indonesian television channel, persuaded them to delay their reading and put their attention to the television instead.

According to Hamdi, an Indonesian in Los Angeles, he relied primarily on the diaspora media to obtain news about Indonesia. He admitted that this kind of publication was more convenient for him since he rarely watched television or accessed online media. His job as a taxi driver gave him little time to spend either in front of the television or a computer. In addition, he did not have the latest edition of the smartphone. "I'm happy with my old cellphone for text and call purposes," he explained. Therefore, he considered reading print media like *Indonesia Media* and *Kabari* the best way to access information about his homeland. Not only were diaspora media easy to get, they were relatively cheap or even free. In contrast, he said that he was rarely interested in reading any American print media since most of the news was not relevant to him. It is difficult to say if cost was an issue in the case of accessing the US newspapers or magazines.

**Online media: Displacement and/or enhancement of other media.** Following the general trend of how Americans use media, the Indonesian diaspora have a tendency to access online media in their everyday lives. According to Perrin and Duggan (2015), at least 84% of American adults use the Internet daily. In addition, the authors noted that Asian Americans have showed the highest percentage (97%) in terms of accessing the

Internet compared to other ethnic or race groups in the US. For this reason, there is relatively no significant difference between the Indonesian diaspora and the general American audience in terms of their access to online media. For most people, the availability of online media in their everyday environment has made these displaced audiences more ready to engage with various media content. On one hand, online media may have become the alternative solution for those who cannot otherwise access traditional media, such as broadcast television, newspapers and magazines. On the other hand, people may use the online media as an additional media experience to the existing available media. For instance, those who have already watched a particular television show might want to seek further information on the episode or just simply want to post or read something online about what they have just watched on television.

In the case of Andre, once he missed the latest episode of *The Game of Thrones* on *HBO*, he simply turned to online media to watch the rerun of the episode. This option was available through technology since Andre's cable subscription offered a bundling service that includes the Internet for \$120 per month. Therefore, online media could be seen as a convenient alternative to access television content when he did not have the time for the traditional broadcasting service. In addition, he could enjoy watching the movies through his tablet when he went online although he sometimes complained about the low quality of the sound and image when he watched a movie online.

Similarly, Hari, a die-hard fan of *The Walking Dead*, once had to miss an episode since he had to watch a music concert at the 9:30 Club in Washington, D. C. on a Sunday night. While driving back home after the concert he explained, "I've already missed

several *The Walking Dead* episodes this season. Last month I came with Andy to the 9:30 Club to watch Johnny Marr, also on Sunday night.” “I will watch the rerun of tonight’s episode later on *Netflix* once I get home from my shift tomorrow,” he promised. For Hari, the shift between two different media platforms, such as from television to online media, is easy in today’s media environment. This helps members of the Indonesian diaspora like him to further engage with the American media content, especially in the case of entertainment.

For some overseas Indonesians, the first media they use when they returned home from work was their laptop. For instance, even though Dewi spent most of her time at her office sitting in front of her personal computer, she had a tendency to turn on her laptop right after she got home from the office. Most of the time, she would open social media in addition to other entertainment-related websites on her laptop. On other occasions, she needed to use the computer to continue working on her assignments, which were not finished during her office hours. She loved to show her family members funny YouTube videos and interesting articles that she found while she browsed the Internet. Unlike most of her male counterparts, Dewi disliked television and movies in general. For her, online media, accessed through her laptop in particular, became her primary entertainment-related media, which she regularly accessed in her leisure time. One time she explained her reason, “I don’t really like it when my husband turns on the television and watches movies with the sound loud. It is very noisy. Television is never turned on when he is not at home.” Online media, in the case of Dewi, should be seen as displacement for other

platforms, since she did not really tune into traditional media like television in the first place.

When asked about the Indonesian diaspora's media preference in seeking the latest information in general, many of my informants claimed they obtained information from the Internet. Online media like the Internet provide a significant assistance for the Indonesian diaspora to catch up with current news in their host country. However, it was difficult to make sense of their claim that using the Internet to find news related to their everyday lives in the US, especially since not many of the diaspora reported subscribing to any mainstream American online media. The problem was, in order to get full access to read online articles in *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, or *The Washington Post* readers are required to pay the subscription fees. None of these informants said they would pay the subscription fees to access these online media. While the audience availability factor might not really limit the Indonesian diaspora access to American mainstream online news, they reported that money was one distinctive factor that might limit their further engagement with news consumption of the host land society. Consequently, for the Indonesian diaspora, use of online media to access the host country news tended to be a sporadic and irregular practice rather than a regular one.

**The importance of the latest smart phones.** Mobile phones provide new opportunities for the Indonesian diaspora to be constantly engaged with various media content. Unlike other traditional media platforms, the use of mobile phones, as implied by their name, highlights the mobile use of this particular medium. While in the past the use of mobile phone was limited to voice calls and texting, in the contemporary era of smart

phones, the Indonesian diaspora in the US follows the same patterns as the general American population in using mobile phone in most of their daily routines. According to Smith (2015), at least 64% of the people in the US own smart phones and use them as one of the primary methods to access information online as well as to get connected to the world. The Indonesian diaspora in both locales, the Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles metropolitan areas, were found to be following the same pattern.

The use of mobile phones has been embedded in most of the Indonesian diaspora's daily activities. It was very rare to find someone without their mobile phone with them. Obviously, mobile phones have been widely used to communicate between the members of diaspora. Even during their daily conversations, it was common discussions to be interrupted by mobile phones, especially when one of them needed to pick up a call, receive a text message check social media pages, or read notifications from his or her messenger apps. Therefore, the practice of using mobile phones is important to these diasporic people and has been integrated into their daily communicative practice.

Shohib, one informant in Washington, D. C., explained his close relationship with his mobile phone. Shohib is intellectual, talkative, outgoing, and very mobile. This is the result of his prior activity in Indonesia. Once a student activist, interested in national politics, majoring in international relations, he later joined the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He gained experience as a journalist at Indonesia's largest news portal, *Detik.com*, which also influenced his media habit even after he moved to the US.

When asked about his media preference, Shohib straightforwardly replied, "For me, what's the most important (device) is the mobile phone." He considered his mobile



phone as an entrance to a wider possibility to various media content. The use of a mobile phone by a mobile person like Shohib was beyond the use of voice calling and texting. Having one of the latest series of iPhone, he used his gadget for multiple purposes, such as accessing online media and checking social networking sites. He installed several applications on his smart phone, which would be incompatible if he just used the old cell phone that was limited to voice calling and texting services only. He felt that his mobile phone has provided him with abundant opportunities to be connected with various events and people, not just here in the US but also back home in Indonesia. This practice of using a mobile phone as a medium to perform transnational communication as exhibited by the Indonesian diaspora has also been found in other diasporic communities (Evers & Goggin, 2012; Horst, 2012). Following the same pattern, these displaced Indonesians took advantage of using the mobile phone to have a wider possibility to recreate the transnational connection with the homeland while they are on mobile.

Sharing content with their peers was another common practice showed by the Indonesian diaspora. While using their mobile phones, they sometimes shared with other Indonesians what was installed on their mobile phone. People who had known each other for some time, did not hesitate to show their friends their mobile phone screen and share various content. One woman showed her friend a funny video made by other Indonesian using *Dubsmash*, a smart phone app, which is frequently used to produce a selfie video with funny sounds. Meanwhile, the other person shared the *Instagram* photos he took with his mobile phone when he went hiking in Shenandoah National Park in Virginia. Overall, although in general the use of the mobile phone among members of the

Indonesian diaspora tends to be individualized, the practice of sharing the content in their mobile phones with their friends or relatives is not uncommon.

The mobile phone also functions as the primary device to maintain connections with both American society and the fellow Indonesians in diaspora. One of the informants exhibited this dualism but in an unbalanced way. On one hand, working as a property agent in the Washington, D. C. metropolitan area, she frequently used her mobile phone for work-related purposes, such as to call or to receive calls from her clients, who were mostly Americans. On the other hand, having most of her family members, from brother to in-laws living in the same metropolitan area, most of the voice calls she made were to interact with her fellow Indonesians in the diaspora. She reported that it was common for her to spend more than 90 minutes per day in phone conversations with her friends or families in diaspora. She made received phone calls in various settings, such as while driving, grocery shopping, and cooking. The phone conversations varied from discussing serious matters, like Indonesian politics, to gossiping. Once she asked for help with a troublesome problem with her iPhone 5s. When asked about what might cause the problem, she admitted that, “I never shut down my mobile phone.”

Another Indonesian diasporan also thought that his life would be inconvenient without having his mobile phone constantly with him. One day, after finishing his breakfast, he prepared to go to his office. After packing some snacks for his lunch, picking up his cap, and hurriedly searching for his car keys, he was ready for work. Saying goodbye, he left for the office. In less than ten minutes, he was back home, and

looking confused, asked if anyone had seen his mobile phone. He said he forgot where he put his Samsung Galaxy. He looked in the living room, then the dining room where he had breakfast, but his phone was nowhere to be found. He decided to try upstairs in the bedroom. Luckily, he found his phone there. He later complained that he was almost late for work but he ultimately was willing to sacrifice his precious ten minutes to drive back home to find his mobile phone.

For many members of the Indonesian diaspora, having a mobile phone, or to be more precise, having the latest edition of smart phone, is seen as performing a particular social status symbol. Only a few of the Indonesian diaspora use the outdated version of the branded smart phones and only one informant said his old fashioned mobile phone enabled him to have only traditional phone and texting services. Indonesians in diaspora tend to catch up with the current trend of the smart phones. Some of them did not hesitate to change their old phones to the latest editions of iPhone or Samsung Galaxy. One of the informants was willing to wait until Black Friday to get the newest Samsung version. One day, the other informant proudly brought his new iPhone 6 to a picnic with some Indonesian diaspora, even though only a couple of days earlier he was still using his iPhone 5s. When he saw a friend using a similar type of smart phone, he inquired, “Is it an iPhone 6? Cool. It looks just like my phone. Here’s mine.” By showing his latest iPhone he thought he could achieve the same level of prestige in terms of having the latest gadget. Owning the latest release of an iPhone would be seen as having higher social status among the Indonesians in diaspora. Indeed, this practice of showing off could arouse jealousy and envy among members of diaspora. Thus, an iPhone is not only

a tool for communication, to obtain media content, but is also a symbol of socio-cultural status among the diaspora.

Another scene of ‘show off’ culture among the Indonesians happened in an Apple Store in Bethesda Row. In the distance, conversations in the Indonesian language could be heard. There were some Indonesian guests wearing batik and accompanied by a high-ranking Indonesian diplomat acting as a tour guide. They had a discussion among them before deciding to talk with the salesman about purchasing the newest iPhone. Presumably, the iPhone would be carried back to Indonesia as a fancy souvenir. The three of them bought three gold editions of the iPhone 6 with 64GB internal memory. They paid hard cash. According to Dewi, one of the local staff at the Embassy, it was common for a guest who had just come from Indonesia to ask for help from the local staff, or any other Indonesian diaspora, to buy the latest gadgets for souvenirs to take back to the home country. “I wonder how much money they have. I didn’t know people in Indonesia were that rich. Some of them once asked my help to buy five of the latest iPhones”, she complained. Dewi further argued that even for an Indonesian diasporan like her, buying the newest edition of a smart phone would still be too expensive.

### **Indonesian Diaspora and the Homeland media**

**The use of media to access content from the home country.** The Indonesian diaspora used a combination of mainstream media and diaspora-homeland media, but the degree of consumption of the homeland media content is more fascinating. In particular, the diversity of the multiple media platforms used to access the media content produced in the home country is the most important aspect to explore in understanding the

complexity of the relationship between diaspora and their media habits. This section will further explore the general media behavior exhibited the informants and how their media preferences are highly flexible depending on the context of the use of the media.

Media preferences among the Indonesian diaspora in both the Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles metropolitan areas were diverse and sometimes dependent on several circumstances. As argued by various scholars, media used by an audience is somewhat influenced by individual characteristics, such as gender and age (Kang, 2002; Pálsdóttir, 2014). The question of whether it is possible to predict these audiences' behavior based on individual characteristics like age, should be further examined to identify the reason behind the person's media behavior. For example, in the case of age differences, the younger diaspora preferred to use online media, either through mobile phones, tablets, or laptops, compared to the elder diaspora. The older generations of the Indonesian diaspora tended to spend more time with television in consuming media content from the home country, in addition to their mainstream media diet. Moreover, most of the senior Indonesian diaspora had more free time since many of them have already retired. This was not the case for the younger people in diaspora, who were busy with their jobs, in many cases more than one job, thus limiting their time at home to watch television content on a TV set.

One thing needs to be noted, when this study mentions the use of television to access media content from the home country, it means that the Indonesian diaspora do not have the privilege of watching Indonesian television content through American cable services. Unlike groups of diaspora in European countries where they could enjoy their

homeland television channels through satellite television, the US has no such satellite television service offering homeland television content for the Indonesian diaspora. As a result, these displaced audiences needed to develop alternative ways to access Indonesian broadcast materials through their television sets at home.

Several modes of accessing homeland television content were commonly exhibited by the Indonesian diaspora. First, they connected their television to the Internet and watched Indonesian television channels through streaming services available online. This method was said to be more enjoyable since the content could be shown on a wider screen than when watching on a computer or laptop screen. Since not all Indonesian television channels provided streaming service directly through their websites, most of the time the Indonesian diaspora had to connect to an online streaming portal like *Mivo TV* in order to access the homeland television channels. *Mivo TV* provided most Indonesian national television channels through its streaming service for free. Second, the Indonesian diaspora could also watch Indonesian broadcast, which was contented through an online streaming service, which was also connected to the television set but with the addition of a particular device in order to get a higher audio-visual quality as well as a more reliable connection. For this reason, some Indonesian diaspora households bought a streaming device called *Roku*. This functioned as a decoder and was used to boost the quality of the streaming content when connected to the television set. Therefore, to maintain a reliable connection to the Indonesian television content, the use of *Roku* in these households became prominent. Other families used similar devices but with different brands, such as *Google Chromecast* and *Apple TV*.



Figure 6. 1. Television hanging on the wall of the Indo Kitchen Indonesian restaurant in Alhambra, Los Angeles, connected to a *Nusan TV* decoder and Indonesian television channel *Berita Satu* was displayed on the screen.

Third, an effort was made by some Indonesian entrepreneurs in Colorado to provide Indonesian television channels through a streaming service called *Nusan TV*. Similar to *Roku*, *Nusan TV* provides the audience with a decoder to filter the streaming services of Indonesian television channels. The annual subscription fees, \$240 for the basic package or \$300 for the full service one, it also includes the decoder and HDMI cables. *Nusan TV* was inaugurated by Ambassador Dino Patti Djalal in the Indonesian Consulate in Los Angeles back in March, 2013, a proof that this service has been officially supported by the Indonesian government's representative. While *Nusan TV* has

reached at least 3,000 subscribers in the US and Canada (“Nusan TV,” 2014), only two of my informants reported they had ever used this Indonesian diaspora-made streaming service.

Contrary to the common assumption of gender bias on media consumption, there was no significant difference between Indonesian male and female diaspora. According to Rinnawi’s (2012) study of the Arab diaspora in Germany, women in diaspora tend to become heavy television viewers. Rinnawi observed that that this was due to two main reasons: media availability and audience availability. Homeland Arabic television programs were available through satellite television in Germany. In addition, these women had plenty of free time, relatively speaking, spending eight hours per day watching television since they were not working. But this was not the case with the Indonesian diaspora in Washington, D. C. nor with the Los Angeles counterpart. Most Indonesian women in both locales are either students, have a job outside the house or are busy housewives. Indonesian housewives were busy with some small businesses like Indonesian food catering or community and cultural activities organized by the Indonesian female diaspora. As a result, these women were short on time in terms of their daily access to television, similar to other Indonesian diaspora.

Meanwhile, the younger Indonesian diaspora, especially students, tend to exhibit a more robust mobility throughout their daily life. Their media preference goes hand in hand with mobile media, especially the smartphone. During my fieldwork, I found it very difficult to find them without smartphones in their hands. Theresia, a female student at the University of Maryland, College Park even said, “It’s like I am almost always online,



especially since I am always using my mobile phone.” Additionally, she said that her smart phone is her primary method to access any information related to her home country. For many Indonesian temporary diaspora like Indonesian students in the US, ‘home’ became a temporary destination for them since most of their time was spent in different places throughout the day: classrooms, libraries, buses, metros. They went online within these different places. It makes sense that the mobility condition experienced has made them rely heavily on mobile media to access homeland media content.

However, the use of mobile phones as one of the most convenient methods of accessing content produced in the homeland was not a privilege exclusive to those Indonesian students. As mentioned previously, the majority of the Indonesian diaspora owned smart phones, quite possibly the latest editions of iPhone or Samsung Galaxy. For the Indonesian diaspora, the smart phone, with its media convergent nature and capability of providing various channels to online media content from the country of origin, has enabled them to be constantly engaged with multiple Indonesian media contents when they are mobile. For instance, the Indonesian diaspora who gathered for a community event at the IMAAM Center exhibited a common practice of using mobile phones to access Indonesian media content. They became involved in several conversations about that content and even exchanged the information with their peers. This activity might not be very common when they were at home, not meeting face-to-face with their fellow diaspora. Some of them claimed that the mobile phone was their most convenient

medium for obtaining information related to Indonesian news and entertainment content while they were not at home.

Priyo, an Indonesian living in Washington, D. C., argued that he relied more on his mobile phone when he was mobile. In Priyo's own words, "I am not that too often in using my mobile phone to obtain news from Indonesian media other than when I am on my way back home from my office and I am on an out-of-state travel" (personal communication, April 3, 2015). He reported that he spent most of his day at work where he was stuck with his PC for work purposes, so his office computer was his primary medium to access media content. Fortunately, since he works for the Indonesian service of *Voice of America*, most of his time in front of his office computer is to monitor various Indonesian media online. The desktop was preferred, in the context of accessing Indonesian content at the office, rather than any other medium. Therefore, the use of a mobile phone to get access to the homeland media content was not the preferred method except when he was on the move.

For some Indonesian diaspora, the use of a mobile phone to obtain media content from the country of origin was intertwined with the use of other media platforms. I even found an informant who read Indonesian news online through his mobile phone while he was watching an American television show on his television set in the living room. The mobile phone was used as his primary medium while television was in the background as his secondary medium. Apparently, this practice of media multitasking was not uncommon for other groups of the diasporic audience. As suggested by previous studies (Georgiou, 2006; Ogunyemi, 2012; Rinnawi, 2012), the use of polymedia in diaspora

tends to be more visible due to the increasing availability of multiple media platforms in the diaspora's everyday life, which is not very different from the mainstream audience.

A less common phenomenon exhibited by only a few of the informants was consuming Indonesian-related content produced in diaspora. This was especially the case with the Indonesian diaspora living in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. For instance, when I asked about what media he used the most to obtain news about Indonesia, Hamdi replied, "*Indonesia Media*, of course. I frequently read this magazine. It is available and free of charge" (personal communication, December 19, 2014). As discussed previously, the presence of diaspora media was relatively visible in the Indonesian diaspora community in Los Angeles, which enabled community members like Hamdi to declare himself a loyal reader of this kind of Indonesian media produced in diaspora. However, this media practice demonstrated by Hamdi is unique compared to the majority of the Indonesian diaspora. For many of the Indonesian diaspora in the Washington, D. C. metropolitan area, for instance, although Indonesian diaspora print media like *Kabari* and *Indonesia Media* were available in several public venues the members of the community usually visit, such as the Indonesian Embassy and Asian grocery stores, not many of these people read the free publications.

Several cues were found to be important in order to better understand the differences of the media attitude of the Indonesian diaspora in the Los Angeles and Washington, D. C. metropolitan areas toward Indonesian print media produced in diaspora. I met twice with John Oei, the publisher of *Kabari*. The first time was in December, 2014 when I was participating at the annual convention of the Indonesian

Muslim Society in America (IMSA) in San Francisco, which he was covering for his publication. The second time was when he came to the Indonesian Embassy to interview one of the attachés, and to write stories about Indonesian community activities in the DC-Maryland-Virginia (DMV) areas. Both meetings brought me a little closer to understanding this issue.

In one of the discussions, John Oei explained the difference between the media cultures in the Indonesian diaspora on the East Coast and the West Coast, especially regarding the diaspora media. The Indonesian diaspora on the West Coast got used to Indonesian diaspora media like *Kabari* and *Indonesia Media* for several reasons. This kind of free publication is relatively more available to the community, being placed in various community centers the Indonesian frequent. Moreover, most of the Indonesian diaspora's community activities were covered by the diaspora media. Consequently, there is reciprocity in terms of media coverage and the readers' interest in the news published by the diaspora media. However, this is not the case with the Indonesian diaspora on the East Coast, and in the Washington, D. C. metropolitan area in particular. For these people, reading *Indonesia Media* or *Kabari* would make them feel disconnected from the content since not many of the news stories are associated with their local community. As stated by Oei, "Most of the news related to Indonesian community activities in the Washington, D. C. area has been covered by (Indonesian Section of) *Voice of America*" (personal communication, April 24, 2015). He was aware of this issue, and said he is now aiming for cooperation with more local people in this area to help him not only to

promote his publication but also to find a way that community members could contribute by providing news and information for the diaspora media.

**Nostalgia of the present-past? The motives of homeland media use.** Living in the West allows the Indonesian diaspora to find multiple ways to access various media content, both from the country of settlement and the country of origin. While the motives for accessing mainstream media in the adopted country tend to be associated more with the general findings of audience research, such as instrumental and ritual motives, the exploration of what factors motivate the Indonesian diaspora to consume media content from the home country is much more complicated than just those two motives exhibited by the mainstream audience. For this reason, this section will be devoted to discussing what major factors encourage the Indonesian diaspora to regularly consume Indonesian media content in their daily lives.

Transnational connections between the Indonesians in diaspora with people and events in the homeland have been more accessible due to the increasing availability of multiple media platforms in the host country. In this condition, the Indonesian diaspora are able to further maintain connections with family and friends as well as current events happening in Indonesia, less restricted by time and place issues. This was one of the major motives said to encourage these people's involvement in the consumption of the information delivered from the country of origin. Maintaining relationships with the homeland becomes important for the Indonesian diaspora, even though some of the reasons might be personal. When one of the Indonesian diaspora was asked about his

personal reason for maintaining his ties with Indonesians through the consumption of homeland media content, he explained:

No matter what, we're Indonesians. We still have many relatives and families living there. If something is happening in the country, like a riot for example, or there is a terror from a violent group—it does not have to be a group like ISIS, but some people like violent burglars—I become worried. (Andre, personal communication, April 5, 2015)

Moreover, in addition to the consumption of mass media content, long-distance personal communication has taken place for decades, using various modes of communication. In the past, many people in diaspora relied on mail services to exchange news with their families back in the homeland. They later switched to long-distance calls when the technology was more affordable. However, for the Indonesian diaspora, making international calls to their families in Indonesia was done infrequently. “An international call to Indonesia was quite expensive back then,” said Andre. Therefore, the availability of a relatively cheap medium, such as the Internet, to communicate with their relatives and friends across the Pacific Ocean has been helpful to further maintain connections with the people on the both sides. The newer medium like the Internet not only further advances the transnational personal communication of the diaspora but it also enriches the modes of consumption of the homeland media content.

Newcomers, who still have warm memories of the homeland, feel that they need to stay connected with people who they have just left behind back home. Struggling to adapt to the new home has also made these displaced people exhibit more frequent

contact with the homeland, including keeping themselves updated on certain events happening in Indonesia. For some diasporans, knowing what is happening in the home country is seen as beneficial in order to start a conversation with their fellow nationals back home. Since it would be more difficult to explain what is currently happening in the US to people in the homeland, the members of the Indonesian diaspora prefer to inform themselves about current events in Indonesia and use that as a discussion topic during transnational communication.

Those who have been in the US for many years said they do not really have a vivid memory of the homeland. The immediate experiences of the people and events in the country of origin were becoming difficult to recall. For this reason, the older generations of the Indonesian diaspora tend to rely more on the consumption of the homeland media content to satisfy their nostalgia of the homeland. Some of the informants complained that the current images of Indonesia shown on homeland television channels they have accessed are disconnected from what they remember when they were in Indonesia. Despite this feeling of disconnection imagery the homeland media consumption practice is inevitable for these people, especially since some of them do not have the privilege of returning to Indonesia to physically experience the changes that have happened there.

For diaspora, the idea of home becomes problematic. Many of the Indonesian diaspora have already considered the place where they are living as their new home. This was evident in the case of Dody, as he explained:

I have been living in Maryland for years, since I was young. I never lived outside Maryland and I have considered this place as my home. It is true that I have moved to several places. But now I have three kids, and don't have a plan to move anywhere more... My parents moved back to Indonesia a few years ago. Well, I might visit them two or three weeks early next year, maybe in February, since my father is not in good health and said he misses me. I am not sure whether I will also move there when I am old, but my wife once summoned this idea. (personal communication, August 12, 2015)

Many Indonesian diaspora like Dody still attempt to hold on to the memories of their home of the past, their parents' home or the home of their ancestors. For them, home was multiple places, rather than a single location. Consuming media content from the homeland was only one distinctive mode of maintaining a connection, the imagery of home. As noted by Georgiou (2006), "images of commonality and of a homeland that was lived in the past and is imagined in the present are shaped in the everyday viewings" (p. 89). In this sense, homeland media consumption becomes the intermediary between the diaspora's memory of the past and their effort to stay informed with people and events happening in the home of the past.

In addition to the nostalgic sense of using the homeland media content, this practice of transnational communication is also associated with an attempt to preserve identity. Various studies on diaspora and media have found an interconnectedness of identity and transnational-homeland media use (Kim, 2011; Mainsah, 2014; Widjanarko, 2007). Just like the Israelis diaspora's use of the homeland media, Kama and Malka



(2013) argue that, “homeland media constitute indispensable identity prosthesis; that is, homeland media not only help combat homesickness but are used as devices in sustaining and empowering native identity” (p. 370). This is also the case of the Indonesian diaspora, especially when many of the informants said that their sense of belongingness as an Indonesian has encouraged them to further inform themselves with media content from the homeland. In doing so, they felt they have, at least, fulfilled their obligation as Indonesian nationals. As argued by Theresia, “Consuming Indonesian media content is like a protection against the temptation to submerge in the American culture.” She admitted that one of her intentions in using Indonesian homeland-media is most likely to read or listen to the Indonesian language. Consuming Indonesian media content was one of her primary modes for preserving her identity through the use of language, especially when she was living in a place where she could not regularly meet with other Indonesian-speaking people.

The more diaspora feel they are being alienated from the host society, the more likely that they will engage with the homeland media even though their reasons for doing so may vary. Their motives for using media content from the country of origin might be to preserve their identity as Indonesians, to maintain an understanding of the language, to stay connected with the people back home, or just simply for nostalgia. So far, these reasons might be seen as neutral and can be associated with the mode of diasporic media use performed by various diaspora communities. However, the motives of media use become more intriguing when the focus is put on a specific topic, such as the consumption of political news and information offered by the homeland media.

## Consuming Indonesian Political News from Diaspora

Grandpa Masfar lives with his wife and his youngest daughter and her family. It is a big family indeed. He migrated to the US with his family back in the early 1980s living for several years in Australia. His other daughter married an Indonesian and they now live in Pennsylvania. His two sons also married Indonesians. Raymond, the older, lives in Damascus while Andre lives in Germantown, both in western Maryland. As part of the family tradition, after the Eid Prayer the big Masfar family gathered at the grandfather's house in Glenmont, Maryland. An 'old type of house' in this area, covered by red bricks, a few feet of grass in the front yard, a few more in the back, where Grandma Masfar grows her own lime trees, Thai basil, and tomatoes. There was enough parking space for three to five cars at the right side of the main building. Grandpa Masfar's house was visited by his children, their spouses and the grandchildren. Some nephews and nieces were also invited. Several distance relatives came for a short visit. The parking spots are all vacant at this moment.

Grandma Masfar cooked traditional Indonesian dishes specially served for the Eid Celebration—sate Padang, *ketupat*, and *es cendol*, all served on the dining table. Since the Masfars originally came from West Sumatra, the cuisine was *masakan* Padang (Padang-style dishes), including *rendang*, the most delicious cuisine in the world according to one survey conducted by CNN (Cheung, 2011). Everyone was enjoying the banquet. There were about 12 adults gathered in the living room, while the younger ones went to play in the backyard. As everyone sitting on the sofas and having conversations, little attention was given to the television set in center of the living room. Grandpa

Masfar just turned it on and watched a random American channel, just to add noise to the living room's atmosphere. The television was background noise while the conversations among the family members was the foreground. The discussions involved various topics, from mundane activities like exchanging recipes to the contemporary political situation in Indonesia. When the discussion became more heated, Sharif, one of the nephews, asked, “*Opa*, can we just watch Indonesian news instead?”

Andre proposed that they should watch the interview with the newly appointed Governor of Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok), the very first ethnic-Chinese governor in Indonesia. Since this was the first time the citizens of Jakarta would be led by a person from an ethnic minority group, a Chinese-Christian, it became a huge debate whether he would be appropriate to lead Jakarta, the capital city of the country. Apparently, the Indonesian diaspora were also interested in this issue. Curious about the broadcast interview of the governor, the family members agreed to watch it. There was no Indonesian television channel available, but the TV was connected to a streaming device, so it was relatively easy to retrieve the online content. Ahok's interview on *Metro TV*, one of the most prominent Indonesian news channels, was played on YouTube and went on the television screen.

The show was an interactive dialog called *Mata Najwa*, hosted by Najwa Shihab. Ahok was asked several questions related to the challenges that he would face as the new governor of Jakarta. Actually, Ahok was a deputy to Governor Joko Widodo (Jokowi) when the pair was elected in the 2012 provincial election in Jakarta. When Jokowi ran for president in mid-2014, Ahok took over his seat, temporary at the beginning but later

becoming permanent when Jokowi eventually won the presidential seat. During the interview, Ahok replied to Najwa's tough questions, and the Masfars later applauded him loudly. "He's a brave man. I am sure that he will succeed in leading Jakarta," Raymond commented. Meanwhile, Sharif complained about the reaction of some Indonesians in the diaspora who he knew were displeased with Ahok's appointment since he is an ethnic-Chinese as well as a Christian and the Muslims are the majority in Jakarta. "We should not see him as a Christian or Chinese. I think we should give him a chance," he added.

At another Masfar family gathering, the discussion in front of the TV tuned to homeland news was again about Indonesian politics and took place in addition to ordinary gossiping in diaspora. This time the topic concerned predicting the composition of the new government's cabinet. The Indonesian National Election Committee had announced Jokowi as the winner of the 2014 presidential election and he had been inaugurated by parliament in the following weeks but had not yet announced his ministers. "There were no definite names to be selected as Jokowi's ministers but several Indonesian media have circulated some speculations about potential candidates," said Sharif. The television station was showing a story related to this issue. In catching up with the discussion, one of the in-laws grabbed his mobile phone and browsed an Indonesian news portal. He read the news aloud to the rest of family, "Here's the update. It is said that several names had been and Anis Baswedan would definitely be chosen as the Minister of National Education." Baswedan, who was a Fulbright scholar and holds his PhD in political science from Northern Illinois University, eventually took this position. According to Sharif, Baswedan is a familiar figure to the Indonesian diaspora in

the Washington, D. C. area since he was a graduate student at the University of Maryland, College Park in the late 1990s. This familiarity with one of the names mentioned in the news had encouraged these diasporic audiences to further discuss this politically related topic brought by the homeland media.

On October 20, 2014, the Indonesian section of *Voice of America* reported on how the Indonesian diaspora in Washington, D. C. were gathering for *nonton bareng* (collective watching) of the inauguration of President Jokowi, which was broadcast live on Indonesian television. The gathering was initiated by Jokowi Center Washington, D. C., an informal political association for the supporters in diaspora of Jokowi, and was said to be associated with the very same association in Indonesia. Jokowi's supporters were invited to the home of Wimboh, an Indonesian diasporan who works for the World Bank and has been a long-time supporter of Jokowi, even before the presidential election. The event was said to be the very first time that people in diaspora could collectively enjoy, celebrate, and watch a live streaming of an Indonesian broadcast of the president's inauguration. This *nonton bareng* event was opened by the *potong tumpeng* (cutting the cone-shape yellow rice dish) ceremony, which is a form of thanksgiving in Indonesian tradition. The audiences were on their feet when the television station broadcast the swearing-in and the national anthem was played in the background. One participant who was interviewed said that even though he has been a regular diasporic audience of Indonesian television, he was happy that he could watch the inauguration of the president on (live streaming) television for the very first time since he went abroad. Another

interviewee said he was very proud to be able to watch the inauguration along with fellow supporters in diaspora.



Figure 6. 2. The Indonesian Service of *Voice of America*'s news report of *nonton bareng* the inauguration of the Newly Elected Indonesian President, Jokowi, on October 20, 2014 in Washington, D. C. Adapted from *Diaspora Nonton Pelantikan Jokowi-JK*. (October 20, 2014). *The Voice of America*. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/6teGZuAV7ns>.

The use of television connected to the Internet has provided the Indonesian diasporic audience with the opportunity to engage in contemporary political issues in the home country. Through this mode of media use, Indonesian television news channels have become more accessible, as has political information provided by the homeland media. What is noteworthy about the Indonesian diaspora's use of television to participate in the everyday discussions of political events in the homeland is that television news consumption is more associated with group viewing than individual viewing. Television at the center of the domestic space like the living room, has a central

role in providing media content for the viewers, attracting the eyes of the diasporic audience to engage them with audio-visual information transmitted from the country of origin. The diasporic audience later changes from audience to discussant. Commenting, making predictions, speculating, and even condemning the political content on television were common practices during the homeland television viewing. In this sense, the practice of using homeland media to access political news from Indonesia becomes the mode of transnational political participation for the Indonesian diaspora. Passive consumption has turned into active involvement in the way the audience discuss homeland political issues provided by the media, as in the watching of Ahok's interview and Jokowi's inauguration.

The use of mobile phones to access political news from the homeland was also prominent among the Indonesian diaspora in both Los Angeles and Washington, D. C. As mentioned previously, the mobile phone is a favorite medium due to its mobility and convenience. During fieldwork in both metropolitan areas it was common to find the Indonesian diaspora retrieving political content from their mobile phones. Some of them even shared their phone screens during the interviews while discussing current political events in the home country. There were two distinctive modes of accessing political content through mobile phones: using the phone's Internet browser to access Indonesian news portals or through Indonesian news mobile phone apps. With those who have news apps on their phones, it was interesting to examine why they were willing to use them. Emil, an informant in Virginia, said it was more convenient for him than to purposefully browse Indonesian news portals. He even motivated other people to download one of his

favorite news apps. “Have you tried to download *Merdeka* mobile apps? It is hilarious. Its news is more sensational than the average Indonesian media,” he encouraged them (personal communication, February 23, 2015).

The motives for accessing Indonesian political content from homeland media, no matter which platform was used, also varied. Motives for consuming general homeland media content, included maintaining connections with people and events back home, expressing and maintaining national identity, and nostalgia about the country of origin. Some users said their motives to engage with Indonesian political content were more related to their personal attitude toward politics. In the words of Shohib:

In my personal opinion, this is not just about the sense of belonging, but it is my personal interest, even though lately I’m a little bit exhausted with media.

However, since now I am also contributing for *detik.com* whether I want it or not I have to keep myself updated with events in Indonesia. And it has been my habit for a long time to keep following political issues, laws, and now I am also learning about economics. (personal communication, March 12, 2015)

Personal interest has been one of the most common reasons mentioned by the Indonesian diaspora when asked why they decided to engage with political news from the country of origin. In Shohib’s, he said he developed his fondness for Indonesian politics when he was in college a few years earlier. When he decided to move to the US, he kept his interest in updating himself with the homeland politics through online media. Moreover, since he was appointed a foreign correspondent for the biggest Indonesian online news portal, *detik.com*, mainly to cover political and Indonesian diaspora’s



community events in the Greater Washington, D. C. area, he had to keep up with his habit of accessing Indonesian political news. Since he accessed most of the online news from his iPhone, he was frustrated when he lost his mobile phone on his way back home on the Red Line Metro.

A similar reason was one factor that motivated Joe to participate in Indonesian politics through consumption of Indonesian news especially political news. Joe and several friends have been involved in the Indonesian diaspora's movement contributing to the educational sector in the homeland through donating money and school supplies to several schools in the remote places in the Papua region. He reported that, "Our effort in helping the education in local communities in Papua should have been supported by the Indonesian government." During the interview, Joe specifically criticized the Indonesian government's failure to provide adequate Internet access to people in Papua, especially for educational purposes. He compared the condition in Papua with schools in the US where students can get easy access to the Internet on a daily basis. Since he believes that the local government in Indonesia has long been associated with corruption, it was difficult for him to rely upon the state's representatives to provide better access to the Internet for education. He further argued, "While we are enjoying the privilege of living in a country where the politics and the economics are more stable, I feel that as Indonesians we should share the difficulties experienced by our fellow citizens back home." For this reason, Joe became more vocal in criticizing the Indonesian government, especially when he frequently learned on the news how Indonesian politicians, such as the parliamentary members, were involved in various scandals or corruption.

The Indonesian diaspora who were involved in the student movement in massive demonstrations that forced President Suharto to step down in 1998 said that their preexisting attitude toward Indonesian politics was a major reason they still care about the political situation of their country of origin. Debbie, who was a student in the Social and Political Sciences Department at the University of Indonesia, argued that, “As a former student activist (back in the 1998 movement) I cannot stay silent when I think there is something wrong with Indonesian politics, even though now I live in America.” Since Debbie regularly monitors the political condition of the homeland through various media, but mainly through her mobile phone, she said that she became more aware about what is happening in Indonesia. Emil, who went to the same university as Debbie gave a similar reason. It was difficult for him to ignore the political circumstances happening in his homeland. He argued that it was more about his personal sense of responsibility, both as a former student activist and as an Indonesian citizen, to participate in the homeland politics, such as being engaged in following political news of the home country.

### **Social Media and the Networked Diaspora**

It was found that in addition to using online media, the Indonesian diaspora have frequently used social media to access political content from their country of origin. I previously discussed how many Indonesian diaspora regularly associated with the use of smart phone as well as access to Internet connectivity in most of their daily activities, both in Washington, D. C. and in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. However, since these displaced audiences did not always have the time to access traditional television and print media, the use of social media, mostly accessed via mobile phone, had been

prominent among these diasporic media users. Moreover, due to the mobile nature exhibited by the Indonesian diaspora in their daily activities, they preferred to obtain homeland political news through social media accessed through a mobile medium like a smart phone.

Previous studies have shown how social media should be regarded as a facilitator of political participation, especially as a medium for production and exchange of political content (Smith, 2009; Yamamoto & Kushin, 2014). In American politics, it was reported that around 21% of online media users relied on social media for information on political campaigns during the 2010 midterm election (Smith, 2011). In addition, according to Sullivan (2008), Obama was very successful in utilizing social media to mobilize his voters, the younger supporters in particular, which highlights the current trend to use social media to disseminate political messages. By living in the American society, to some extent, the Indonesian diaspora are following the same pattern, both to obtain political news from the country of origin as well as to contribute to the exchange of political information of the home country.

The Indonesian diaspora, in both the Washington, D. C. and the Los Angeles metropolitan areas, revealed two main reasons why they used social media to participate in homeland political discussions. First, social media were readily available. When asked about her primary medium to access Indonesian political news, Lisa, an overseas Indonesian in Los Angeles straightforwardly answered, “Social media, of course. I obtain most of the news about Indonesian politics from social media.” As has been discussed previously, most of the Indonesian diaspora interviewed said they were using mobile

phones in their daily lives for purposes beyond voice calls and texting. Since the mobile phone had been the primary mode to access online content, the use of social media became inevitable. Moreover, during the observations, social media apps were also considered one of the most basic applications that should be available, installed in the latest smart phones owned by these Indonesian diaspora. It rarely did Indonesians not have social media apps installed on their smart phones. At the very least, they had the Facebook app.

This easy availability of social media in their hands, accessed through their mobile phones, further encouraged online engagement of diaspora with political content of the homeland. This resonated with the second reason the Indonesian diaspora used social media—for convenience. For many of them, accessing social media to further consume political content became much easier than having to seek out the very same information through another medium, such as television or print publications. Without actively seeking political news, many informants said they were inevitably exposed to Indonesian political news since people online in social media share the news anyway. Therefore, just by opening social media pages, such as Facebook and Twitter, it was most likely that Indonesian diaspora could obtain Indonesian political content automatically. Shohib explained why using social media to get connected with Indonesian political content was considered convenient:

Now I prefer to follow news posted by people on Twitter or Facebook since I don't want to spend much time searching the news one by one or looking at the news index, where not all the news may be important. The kind of news people

usually share on social media is either something interesting or important, or funny. So, these people have selected the news for me and I just need to read it. (personal communication, March 12, 2015)

The practice of consuming political information through social media shown by Shohib illustrates the newer mode of engagement with homeland political content. Social media functions as a content curator, explained by Tin-yuet (2015) as, “curation, as a new media practice, involves finding, categorizing, and organizing relevant online content on specific issues” (para. 6). As a content curator, social media provides selected relevant content ready to be consumed anytime the audience wants and needs to, without the need to purposefully seek information. Moreover, content curation by peers on social media, even though they are amateurs, has the ability to make the content more prominent and valuable to the audience (Villi, Moisander & Joy, 2012). This is a one strategy to filter the overwhelming political information from the homeland, which might be most relevant and important for diaspora. Since people on social media have done this content curation for Shohib, he did not need to perform the role of an active-seeking media user to consume Indonesian political content when he accesses his social media pages. Within this sense, he considered using social media like Facebook and Twitter a convenience, and thus was further encouraged to engage with the homeland political news available on social media.

For contemporary society, the practice of news consumption is no longer regarded as an individual practice, especially if we use social media as the context. Nowadays, the consumption of online media is considered more as a collective practice and is associated

with shared social experience (Villi et al., 2012). It is reported that at least three quarters of the American news audience, for example, consumes content shared by their fellow audiences (Purcell, Rainie, Mitchell, Rosenstiel & Olmstead, 2010). This trend is followed by a minority audience group like the Indonesian diaspora, especially since the sense of belongingness as a (minority) community is relatively stronger compared to the generic audience. As reported by many Indonesian diaspora, sharing media content like political news is seen as a shared social experience with their fellow nationals as fellow audiences, both in the homeland and in diaspora. Benedict Anderson (2006) in his phenomenal book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, explained that print media defined the idea of imagined audiences through collective readerships. This idea eventually contributes to the development of a sense of being an imagined community among fellow readers, which he further argued will lead up to the construction of nationalism enabled by media consumption. In the case of the Indonesian diaspora, their consumption of homeland political content through social media has enabled them to construct the idea of an imagined community with their fellow audiences/nationals both in the homeland and in diaspora. By contributing to the exchange of Indonesian political content through Facebook, for example, these displaced nationals felt they could maintain a connection with contemporary political conditions in the homeland without having to be physically present in Indonesia.

Moreover, one specific nature of the social media is that it should be seen as providing a transnational network for the Indonesian diaspora to consume, share, and exchange the political content of the homeland through social media, which is the

function of social media as a transnational social network. The transnational network is visible in the friend lists on the social media pages owned by the Indonesian diaspora. As reported by many of the informants, Facebook has allowed them to reconnect with people in the country of origin. In most cases, the majority of the people on their friend lists on Facebook are their fellow nationals in Indonesia rather in diaspora. This kind of transnational network enabled through Facebook has encouraged further circulation of political content from the homeland to diaspora. Consequently, it was more difficult not to be exposed to the Indonesian political content when an Indonesian diaspora opened his or her social media page since it was more likely that Facebook friends in Indonesia would post Indonesian politics-related content on Facebook anyway.

It is true that the use of social media to participate in transnational politics of the homeland might encourage passive consumption of media content. The Indonesian diaspora do not need to actively seek the homeland political news since the news will ultimately be available on Facebook or Twitter. However, it was also found that some of the Indonesian diaspora tended to perform various roles of active media users by participating in the homeland political discussion through social media. Active media users could perform several degrees of activity varying from least active to most active. For example, if they like political news posted by other Indonesians on social media, the users could either click the Like button on Facebook or Favorite the tweet to indicate agreement with that particular news content.

In a more active way, the Indonesian diaspora could also post or repost any Indonesian political news on their own social media page, or even comment to other

people's posts. When they strongly agree or strongly disagree with some news on certain political issues, they tend to comment to other people's posts. In some cases, this practice could lead to a heated online discussion. One informant in Los Angeles shared a story about the 2014 Indonesian National Election. Differences of political preference had contributed to a fight on social media between two cousins in an Indonesian diaspora family in Los Angeles. The conflict flared up when they were criticizing one another's opposing candidates on Facebook and ended when one of them decided to remove his cousin from his Facebook friend list.

In addition to social media, the use of instant messaging was prominent among the Indonesian diaspora both in Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles. Instant messaging was seen as an extension of both online media and social media. In Debbie's case, she used instant messenger apps like *WhatsApp* mainly to share and to exchange political news with her peers in addition to her regular communication practices. In one of our interview sessions, she shared a YouTube video about a political rally organized by a coalition of female Indonesian diaspora in front of the Capitol to support Candidate Jokowi during the presidential election in mid-2014. "Do you have email? Oh, I can send you the video via *WhatsApp*. You do have *WhatsApp*, don't you?" she asked. She found it more convenient to send the video through instant messenger, rather than share it by email or even social media.

Debbie explained that she regularly communicates with her fellow political activists in Indonesia for updates on the homeland political sphere. She used to get updates through *WhatsApp* from Andi Widjajanto, a member of Jokowi's campaign team



who currently holds the position of Secretary of Cabinet. Through Andi, Debbie could get the most updated political information related to President Jokowi's political decisions on various issues, information which might not be reported by the Indonesian mainstream media. For Debbie, instant messaging was a transnational medium that enabled her transnational participation with homeland politics.

For other Indonesian diaspora, using instant messaging might be limited to an exchange of homeland political content with fellow members of the Indonesian diaspora in their own locales. It is common for Indonesians in the diaspora to have several group chats on their instant messenger apps. On various occasions, people shared and exchanged links to Indonesian political news with their peers in these groups. While this practice was more convenient than social media use, there was also a sense of group communication when instant messenger apps were used to share Indonesian political content with the higher possibility of direct feedback from their peers. In this sense, the use of *WhatsApp* groups for political discussions can be associated with talking politics as part of group gossiping. Moreover, political discussion does not have to be a humorless conversation. For the Indonesian diaspora, discussing the political condition of the country of origin can be less than serious and might even be placed in the context of gossiping. The difference is only the matter of the medium. While in the past gossiping about Indonesian politics may have only been possible through face-to-face communication or by long-distance phone calls, nowadays it can be done through social media as well as instant messenger.

## Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed how diasporic audiences like the Indonesian diaspora use multiple media platforms to obtain information as well as entertainment content both from the host land and from the homeland media. On one hand, the Indonesian diaspora tended to exhibit media behavior that goes with the general pattern of mainstream audiences, using television to access local news and watching popular American television shows. On the other hand, these displaced audiences also exhibited a distinct media behavior, of accessing their media content from the homeland media along with their regular consumption of the media content from the adopted country. The Indonesian diaspora performed this dualism practice of switching back and forth between media for informative and entertaining content from Indonesia and the US on a regular basis. In the case of television, the Indonesian diaspora had to develop a particular way to access broadcast content from their country of origin since not all Indonesian television channels are available within the US traditional media system. Thus, the diaspora had to combine their television sets with an Internet connection in order to access online streaming services of the homeland television channels. In addition to television and online media, print media were also available though not the preferred media, especially for Indonesian diaspora in the Washington, D. C. area. Mobile phone and social media were the two most used media to access content from Indonesia.

The motivations of the Indonesian diaspora to use media to obtain content from the homeland were also varied. They include maintaining identity as an Indonesian, nostalgia for the homeland and establishing transnational connections with people and

events back home. Moreover, the reasons they use media to access Indonesian political content are also associated with the preexisting attitude toward homeland politics. Those who reported having personal interest in Indonesian politics had a tendency to engage with the political news of the homeland even though they have lived in the US for years. The experience of physical displacement did not prevent these displaced citizens from following the updated news from their country of origin, especially news related to national politics. Availability of newer media platforms, social media and instant messaging, accessed through smart phones in particular, had been shown as a distinct media behavior of the Indonesian diaspora to participate with homeland politics. In this sense, their engagement with Indonesian politics revolved around their modes of political news consumption accessed through these media in their everyday lives. Media, especially homeland media, are regarded as the center of the Indonesian diaspora's engagement with the Indonesian political sphere.

## **Chapter VII: Celebrating (Mediatized) Homeland Politics from Afar**

In this chapter I will further describe how the Indonesian diaspora in both cities, Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles, performed their real-life transnational-homeland political participation. In previous chapters, I explored how the practice of media use, in particular the consumption of political news enabled by access to homeland media, highlights the members of diaspora's increasing reliance upon media to maintain their connections with their home country's political matters, as has been suggested by mediatization theory. As a result, through appropriation of various media, especially homeland political news accessed via online and social media, people in diaspora have had a wider opportunity to further follow their homeland politics from afar. In this chapter, I will put more emphasis on the actual and direct-physical involvement in homeland political matters beyond the practice of media consumption.

Here, I focus on the two primary modes of long-distance political engagement, electoral and non-electoral participation, of the Indonesian diaspora in both metropolitan areas, and place them in the context of mediatization of politics experienced by members of Indonesian diaspora. I begin this chapter by outlining three major examples of electoral political participation demonstrated by members of diaspora, such as becoming a member of an Indonesian political institution, taking part in the national-homeland elections, and casting a vote during the election periods. Following mediatization theory, I argue that these electoral transnational-homeland political activities should be understood in parallel with the notion that the members of diaspora were becoming more dependent upon media, both to obtain political information and to articulate their political

interest. In the subsequent section, I describe how activities related to non-electoral political participation exhibited by people in diaspora, such as joining diaspora-homeland associations, lobbying or campaigning for political issues, and attending politics-related public meetings, could be used to better illustrate how the Indonesian diaspora is being further engaged in the homeland political sphere outside the context of national elections. Admittedly, examination of the use of media to perform such political participations, both electoral and non-electoral, occurs throughout the discussion.

### **Participation in Electoral Politics**

In the past, scholars considered the electoral political processes in Indonesia to be problematic. Antlöv (2004) even argued that elections under Suharto's New Order regime, "had little to do with democracy" (p. 2), especially since most of the political processes surrounding the elections under his rule were carefully managed to secure Suharto's party, Golkar, power in the parliament (Anderson, 1996). While the role of media was curtailed so it only, "serves as cheerleaders, spreading the good news of government policies and programs" (Liddle, 1996, p. 35), Indonesian constituents were discouraged from engaging in any political participation outside the national campaigns, which were only held every five years. Therefore, it can be argued that these people's participation in politics was not only limited but also trivial. Fortunately, Suharto's downfall in 1998 encouraged political liberalization in Indonesia, which also opened a wider possibility for people to participate in the electoral processes (Voionmaa, 2004).

Previous studies of Indonesian voting behavior have provided some insights into current Indonesian politics (Fukuoka & na Thalang, 2014; Higashikata & Kawamura,

2015). For instance, Mujani and Liddle (2010) explained that their surveys during the 1999 and 2004 elections found that leadership (candidate appeal) and party ID (self-identification with political party) were two significant factors in determining Indonesian voters' decisions. Furthermore, they found this trend was replicated in the 2009 election where they found that in addition to the increasing role of media (campaigns), television in particular, "the appeal of a party leader or presidential candidate remains the most important factor," (p. 37), which highlighted the nature of Indonesian national elections in general. Here, it becomes important to examine whether this trend of personality of political parties or figures persisted in the case of the Indonesian diaspora's political behavior during the 2014 elections. In the following section, I will further discuss how the ways that Indonesians in the US engaged in their transnational-homeland political sphere during the election periods might resonate with preexisting studies on Indonesians' electoral behavior.

**Membership in home country political institutions.** How do the Indonesian diaspora engage with homeland politics during the election periods? Why do they want to participate in the political activities of their country of origin? As has been argued by many members of diaspora, having experienced displacement from the home country has forced overseas Indonesians to both reimagine and to rearticulate their political engagement with the political sphere situated far away, back home. For members of the Indonesian diaspora who actively participated in the homeland politics, the very core of this long-distance political practice was supporting the political institutions of the homeland in diaspora, such as joining the home country's political party. They reported

that previously, under the authoritarian regime of President Suharto, Indonesians in the US did not have any particular political party in diaspora available for them to express their political needs. However, when, following the collapse of Suharto's regime in 1998, efforts were made by either political parties' representatives who came directly to the host country to open an official branch office or a self-declared political party's branch in diaspora by Indonesians in the US, the Indonesian diaspora argued that they obtained a wider possibility to reappropriate their relationship with the home country's political institution.

In the case of the presence of Indonesian political parties in the US, various stories revealed how they were introduced to diaspora. In Los Angeles, according to Bucek, one of the very first indications of homeland political organizations in this area was the introduction of *Pemuda Pancasila* (the Pancasila Youth), an Indonesian paramilitary organization. Historically, *Pemuda Pancasila* had been associated with Suharto's regime and was used by his government to mobilize youth to confront communists and was even thought by Ryter (1998) as, "active in slaughtering suspected communists" (p. 55). While *Pemuda Pancasila* was denounced for their involvement in the violent conflict in Maluku in 2000, in the post-Suharto era the activities of *Pemuda Pancasila* are more associated with security service, debt collection and land clearing for businesses, ("Jakarta prominent," 2009), thus labeled this political organization as a youth gang (Ryther, 2002). Supporters of *Pemuda Pancasila* in Los Angeles has held informal meetings since 2010 but was only officially inaugurated by its leader, Japto Soerjosoemarno, who came from Jakarta to Los Angeles in January, 2014 (Santosa,

2014). This indicates that the organization could gain wider support from people in diaspora, which resulted in an invitation to the organization's leader from Indonesia to come to the US. "I don't know why in only a short period of time *Pemuda Pancasila* became popular among Indonesians in Los Angeles," said Bucek with confusion.

Previously, Ulfen (2008) discussed how Indonesian politics has long been considered disconnected with ideology brought by political parties, especially since the communist party of PKI was banned and political leftists were suppressed under the New Order regime. Moreover, Ulfen explained that the absence of ideological politics in Indonesia had been filled by the neopatrimonialism of Suharto, resulting in the popularity of figure-based politics. Doni, another Indonesian diasporan in Los Angeles, argued that it is important to understand how the nature of people in diaspora, by being displaced from their home country for certain periods of time, has become to some extent disconnected from the contemporary political discourse in the homeland. He explained that many of the members of the Indonesian diaspora in Los Angeles were migrated to the US during the Suharto's leadership—where they enjoyed a relatively stable political and economic condition in Indonesia. During this time, *Pemuda Pancasila* was closely associated with Suharto as a political figure, which resulted in a more positive image about this political organization. As a result, when *Pemuda Pancasila* was introduced in diaspora, many Indonesian diaspora from this generation tended to refer to their previous experience of, and nostalgia about, Indonesian politics.

It may be true that the Indonesian diaspora in the US could still obtain updates about various Indonesian political news from the homeland media. However, it seems



that by referring only to the newest political development via media, these members of diaspora failed to be more aware about the current status of *Pemuda Pancasila* in the Indonesian contemporary political sphere. Following Doni's line of argument, prior experience as well as pre-existing political stance became important elements in understanding the political behavior of members of diaspora, as in the case of these Indonesians' hospitable attitude toward this 'youth gang' political organization.

After the introduction of *Pemuda Pancasila*, more political parties arrived in Los Angeles. Bucek mentioned that the Indonesian diaspora community invited members of Gerindra (the Great Indonesia Party, *Partai Gerakan Indonesia Raya*) to a community event in San Bernardino on April 13, 2013, which was attended by around 2,000 people. Meanwhile, during my fieldwork in Washington, D. C., Indonesian political parties remained were less prominent in this metropolitan area. Yet, some Indonesian political parties, such as Gerindra, the Democratic Party (*Partai Demokrat*), the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan*, PDI-P) and the Justice and Welfare Party (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*, PKS) had obtained a significant support from the Indonesian diaspora in this metropolis. According to Robbynson Sui, the Party's Area Coordinator (*Koordinator Wilayah*) in the US, the PDI-P branch in America has been established since the year 2000 with its main base in the Washington, D. C. area. Nevertheless, compared to the diaspora community in Los Angeles, there was very little direct effort made by the Indonesian diaspora in the Washington, D. C. area to actively invite executive party members from Indonesia to attend their community

meetings—as part of official ties between the parties in the homeland with their supporters in diaspora.

Following the presence of homeland political organizations in diaspora, many Indonesians in both the Washington, D. C. and the Los Angeles metropolitan areas disclosed that they became more interested in the home country's politics. In response, some of them voluntarily joined an Indonesian political party in diaspora. Those who already had a high interest in homeland politics said that they did not hesitate to exhibit their willingness to become political party members. Meanwhile, others said they did not want to join a political party but just wanted to become supporters for a particular political organization. This was especially the case of overseas Indonesians like Yusi, an Indonesian diasporan housewife who expressed hesitation about joining a political party. “I was a supporter of Partai Demokrat when it backed SBY (Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono) as the presidential candidate in the 2009 election, but it does not mean that I became a member of the party,” she explained. During the 2014 election, she was a diehard supporter of Jokowi for president even though she did not join his political party, PDI-P. She further argued, “I'd love to support Jokowi, but I don't really like his party.”

Indeed, in the post-Suharto period, scholars argued that the current political system that enables direct presidential elections has lessened the influence of political parties (Kawamura, 2013; Ulfen, 2006, 2008). Contemporary Indonesian politics, as argued by Kawamura (2013), “indicates a phenomenon where presidential candidates appeal directly to the voters and present their populist policies directly through mass media, since direct presidential elections erode the importance of party organization and

ideology” (p. 5). Following this line of argument, it can be understood why people in diaspora were reluctant to be affiliated with a political party while they were more enthusiastic about participating in presidential elections. During the fieldwork, I frequently met members of diaspora who were eager to talk about Indonesian politics but were reluctant to identify with a particular political party. In some cases, the Indonesian diaspora were afraid that joining an Indonesian political party could brand them with the image of that party, though they argued this was not a problem when the party’s image was positive. Unfortunately, stigmatization was the case with some Indonesian political parties, especially when the Indonesian media reported political scandals involving politicians from those parties.

Adjie, one of the informants in Washington, D. C., shared his experience concerning this problem of Indonesian political party affiliation. When he joined PKS, he became identified with this Islamic political party. He argued that this would help him find people who also wanted to join his party, or at least support it, but this attachment might also distance him from people affiliated with opposing political organizations. Sometimes, it was difficult for him to defend his position when his party was reported by Indonesian media to have been involved in political scandals in Indonesia. “It became more than just campaigning for my party, but it also became political education,” he argued. “I had to explain that the scandal was sensationalized by the media, and it should not be generalized to all PKS members.” Nevertheless, Adjie realized after he decided to join this particular party, it would be difficult for him to separate the party’s image from his personal identity.

Following this line of argument, it was reasonable for some Indonesian diaspora to support Indonesian political parties without needing to become an active member of a specific party. They could be like Yusi, who when possible, tried to minimize the visible attributions of the party as much as possible. This would save them from exclusion by other members of diaspora who might have different political points of view. Yet, I still could find Indonesian diaspora like Adjie, who was not afraid to disclose his association with the homeland political party he supported during the election periods.

Indeed, it was understandable that the Indonesian diaspora exhibited different attitudes toward Indonesian political parties. As mentioned previously, some members of diaspora reluctant to be explicitly affiliated with a particular party reported difficulty in being decisive in their transnational politics, especially since, “many diasporas have perceptions of the homeland that are frozen in time or distorted nostalgia rather than shaped by recent experience” (Lyons, 2006, p. 269). It is also important to note that before 1999, the Indonesian authoritarian government officially recognized only three political parties to run for national election, the Indonesian Democratic Party (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia*, PDI), the Party of the Functional Group (*Partai Golongan Karya*, Golkar) and the United Development Party (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan*, PPP) (Kingsbury, 1998; Liddle, 1996). Only Golkar remains a major political party in the current Indonesian political system. Consequently, the Indonesian diaspora who had migrated before this period speculated that they might not really have a direct experience or familiarity with the current parties in the Indonesian political sphere. They had to rely upon media for information about the political party they favored. They argued this was

an important step in the Indonesian diaspora's decision of whether or not to support their political party and candidate in both legislative and presidential elections.

**Take part in national election campaigns.** In the post-Suharto period, due to the availability of the homeland political entity in diaspora, overseas Indonesians had relatively little trouble engaging and performing in election campaigns as a part of their transnational political participation. Moreover, during my fieldwork, some members of diaspora told me that joining a campaign during national elections had been considered one of the most visible political engagements exhibited by the Indonesian diaspora. Although actively campaigning was different from mere political party membership, which could be secretive, joining a political campaign was publicly visible and difficult to keep private. Engagement in a campaign means declaring one's political identity to the public, including fellow Indonesian diaspora. Even though this was relatively risky, in that it might trigger disagreement from opposing political party supporters, it did not mean that some members of the Indonesian diaspora were afraid to go all out in their political campaigning. Adjie mentioned PKS, an Indonesian party affiliated with Islamic ideology, as one of the earliest homeland political parties present in diaspora, not only in the US but also in other countries like the United Kingdom, Egypt, Japan and Malaysia. According to Taufik Ramlan Wijaya, the PKS Head of Foreign Affairs, this party has at least 7,000 overseas Indonesian supporters in 20 different countries (Asril, 2013). During the latest legislative election in 2014, PKS supporters in diaspora campaigned for the party's mission for the election, a trend followed by several latecomer parties, such as PDI-P and Gerindra, both in Washington, D. C. and in Los Angeles. However, I observed

that while PKS had a visible presence on the East Coast where the Indonesian Muslim diaspora are more present, this political party was less visible in Los Angeles due to the smaller number of Indonesian Muslims living there. As reported by PKS supporters, their activities were focused more on religious-related activities like *pengajian* (Islamic discussion) than on all-out political campaigns. Therefore, secular parties like PDI-P and Gerindra gained more supporters in Southern California. As mentioned earlier by Bucek, Indonesian secular party campaigns were held at community gatherings, picnics and other informal meetings rather than through formal rallies.

Members of diaspora shared a story that happened during the 2014 Indonesian presidential campaign. There were only two presidential candidates: Joko Widodo (Jokowi) and Prabowo. Jokowi was supported by PDI-P while Prabowo was backed by his own party, Gerindra, and other coalition parties like PKS and Partai Demokrat. The political behavior of diaspora in their engagement with political institutions changed from supporting one particular party to supporting the party-endorsed candidate. Supporters of Gerindra, PKS and Partai Demokrat joined in to campaign for Prabowo.

A slightly different situation occurred with Jokowi. Being supported by PDI-P, and some minor parties, he had to embrace Indonesian diaspora who did not want to be affiliated with any particular party. It was fortunate for Jokowi that some members of Indonesian diaspora who had not previously explicitly endorsed any party during the legislative election, later expressed their support for him during the presidential election.

A unique example was shown by pro-Jokowi Indonesian diaspora in Washington, D. C. During the presidential election period, several diaspora members affiliated with

PDI-P held a campaign rally in front of the White House. On another occasion, another diaspora group, unaffiliated with *any* political parties organized a pro-Jokowi campaign, but this one was in front of the Capitol. Apparently, living in the center of the American political sphere gave these displaced nationals the idea of using these sites for some homeland political campaigning. They claimed that political campaigning in front of Obama's office and the Capitol was an appropriate strategy of homeland politics fitting into the host land's physical environment. They admitted they were not particularly aiming their message at the American politicians, they were just sending a message to the Indonesian public as well as their fellow nationals who supported their presidential candidate, Jokowi. Rather than using the physical distance from home as an excuse to disengage from homeland politics, these Indonesian diaspora members turned their limitations into distinct transnational political participation, which could not be exercised by anyone other than the Indonesian diaspora. Moreover, Debbie, one of the organizers, argued that the awareness of these displaced people of their diasporic experience as Indonesians living in one of the most powerful countries in the world encouraged them to utilize their situation in their symbolic political campaigns.

This peculiar transnational political activism also attempted to reach a wider audience, especially once they gained media coverage. The diaspora's involvement in these national campaigns sometimes attracted several media institutions. *The Voice of America (VoA)*, mainly its Indonesian section, covered several of the events including a pro-Jokowi rally in front of the White House on June 24, 2014, which was later relayed by Indonesian broadcast channels in the homeland. Similarly, Indonesian diaspora media

like *Kabari* and *Indonesia Media* also covered various diasporic political campaigns in California. Members of diaspora argued that these media's role in disseminating political messages made by Indonesia diaspora should be considered important, that media functioned not just as the mediator of political communication between people in diaspora and political actors in the homeland but also as a primary means of political expression for these displaced citizens. Andre argued, "When Indonesian diaspora engaged in a political campaign in public space, it is more about sending a message that says, 'We are here,' showing that fellow nationals abroad still care about Indonesian politics." By doing so, the Indonesian diaspora were also maintaining their transnational connections with their fellow nationals at home, in terms of their engagement in the home country's political sphere. Moreover, by participating in Indonesian political campaigns in diaspora, Indonesians in the US were following the popular political discourse of what was trending in the home country. "We also want to celebrate this *pesta demokrasi* (festival of democracy), just like people in Indonesia," said Bona, in Maryland.

As discussed in the previous chapter, use of online media as a distinctive mode of electoral participation of diaspora has been a common practice of nationals abroad, where the main focus was meant to provide moral support for the political candidates in the homeland political sphere (Antwi-Boateng, 2011). Many Indonesians in diaspora revealed that they used online media to promote their political opinions, mainly during the Indonesian election periods. Some admitted that they were involved in homeland political campaigning for a particular party through an online campaign, mainly because physical participation options were not always available for them. In this sense, they



became what Pasura (2012) called epistemic diaspora political activists or members of diaspora who engaged in cyberspace homeland political activism. This is like the case of Adjie, administrator of social media pages of the PKS's North American section during the 2014 Indonesian Legislative Election, who considered the use of online media one of the most convenient modes of disseminating political messages to a wider audience. Yet, he was not sure whether this approach would be more effective for political campaign compared to being involved in a more direct and physical campaign.

Nevertheless, some members of diaspora found that participating in an online political campaign was not always convenient. Those who engaged in this online political activism had to prepare themselves for being attacked online by their political opponents. This occurred in social media like Facebook when a supporter of one political party or presidential candidate would post political messages for their own campaigning. As reported by the Indonesian diaspora, both in Washington, D. C. and in Los Angeles, the escalated tension and further division based on political preference were mainly visible during these campaigning periods.

Moreover, online friction had an impact on the non-online environment in diaspora. What happened online also influenced offline relationships among the Indonesian diaspora who supported different political parties or candidates. Therefore, during my fieldwork, I frequently met people who gossiped about their political opponents who frequently campaigned through Facebook. I encountered a similar situation while I had a short casual conversation with several Indonesian Muslim diaspora after the Friday prayers on the lower floor of the Consulate Office in Los Angeles. The

Indonesian Muslim community usually organized a small potluck right after the Friday prayers and this was an event to meet people as well as to engage in conversations with fellow Indonesian Muslim diaspora. While enjoying the Indonesian food, I was also involved in a conversation with four members of diaspora who said they supported presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto during the 2014 Presidential Election. They referred to Indonesian news events when they talked about the current political regression in Indonesia, and then complained that this would not have happen if only Prabowo had been elected president.

When the conversation ended and the group had dispersed a person joined me and introduced himself as a supporter of Jokowi, the candidate who won the presidential seat. He confessed that he was not comfortable talking to me when I was with a group of Prabowo's supporters and approached me only after they left. Later, he shared his opinions on the election results of and said he was happy when Jokowi won.

This reminded me of the speech by the *khotib* (preacher) during the Friday prayer sermon earlier. *The khotib* explained that, "Islam is bigger than democracy." He emphasized that major political events in Indonesia, such as the political campaign and the national election should not divide the *ummah* (the Muslim people) in diaspora. He also regretted that the diaspora's participation with homeland's politics had further divided the community.



*Figure 7. 1.* A Friday prayer on the lower floor of the Indonesian Consulate General in Los Angeles where the *khotib* (preacher) gave a reminder that homeland political events should not divide the *ummah* (the people) in diaspora.

This story above shows how the division between Indonesian political supporters in diaspora affected the real-life interaction among members of diaspora. I found the division escalated when politics intertwined with religious sentiment. For example, Prabowo's supporters argued that his opponent, Jokowi, was supported by the secular PDI-P party and was thus less supportive of Muslims. In contrast, Prabowo, supported by an Islamic party like PKS, was considered by his followers to be promising in terms of accommodating an Islamic agenda in Indonesian politics. In this sense, many Prabowo's supporters in diaspora felt that Muslims who supported Jokowi should be urged to change their minds about supporting a 'secular' presidential candidate. Anyone who refused the invitation to switch their political opinion might be excluded from conversations with pro-Prabowo diasporans. Apparently, these people indicated that they mainly referred to

Indonesian political news to support their political assumptions rather than basing their opinions on a real-life experience of Indonesian politics.

Meanwhile, a more positive tone came from Arthur, a diasporan who thought there was a blessing in disguise during the 2014 Indonesian political campaign in diaspora. Referring specifically to the Indonesian community in Los Angeles, he explained that the members of diaspora tended to be divided by religious and ethnic divisions, sub-communities based on ethno-religious categorizations, such as Indonesian-Muslims, Indonesian-Chinese-Christians and Indonesian-Minahasan-Christians groups. However, during the presidential campaign, those who came from different religious and ethnic backgrounds could gather in one place, supporting one particular party or candidate. “As you can see, Jokowi’s supporters came from both Muslim and Christian diaspora, who rarely got together except during this kind of campaigning period,” Arthur explained.

Several other Indonesian diaspora showed their concern about politics-related division among community members and even blamed the media in this situation. Joe, for example, said that he was disturbed by the increasing trend of attacking opposing parties on social media during campaigns. “I am really concerned that people nowadays could easily post *berita fitnah* (defamatory news) from unreliable online sources,” he explained. Since obtaining various pieces of information related to Indonesian politics was less difficult than before, he found that many Indonesian diaspora had become less critical in consuming political information. Joe further argued media consumers were neither aware nor concerned with the credibility of the news source and even later they

shared the alleged news to their social media pages. He assumed this would eventually lead to the spread of defamatory messages on online media during the political campaigns, which result in a squabble on social media between opposing supporters.

Overall, I found the nature of engagement in political campaigns, whether off line or online, indicated the degree of mediatization of transnational politics among Indonesian diaspora, both in Washington, D. C. and in Los Angeles. These transnational-homeland political activists were eager to take part in street protests or campaigns, and even invited fellow supporters in diaspora to join them. Later, they posted their campaigns to online media and further circulated their political enthusiasms through social media. This further highlights the mediatization of politics, where mediatized political activism by members of diaspora intertwined, amalgamated with, and even substituted for non-mediated engagement of political practices. Meanwhile, less active diaspora, revealed that they relied more on reading (or watching) online campaign materials for the most updated political information related to the national election, which increased their dependence upon media to engage in the homeland electoral processes, rather than be fully involved in a real-life transnational-homeland political participation.

**Vote in the home country elections.** The Indonesian Election Act of 2012 stated that only Indonesian citizens can cast votes during an election (“Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia,” 2012). Therefore, overseas Indonesians who maintain their home country’s passport will still be able to cast vote. However, the members of Indonesian diaspora who already changed their citizenship are excluded from this electoral political participation. Nevertheless, during the fieldwork, I frequently met with Indonesian

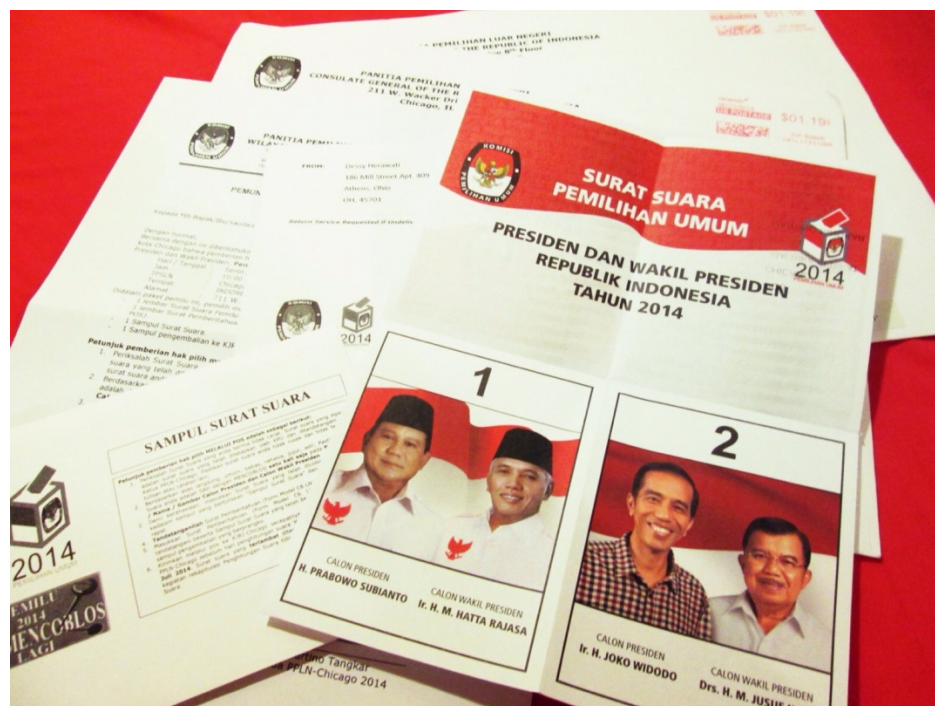
diasporans who already became American citizen said that they actually wanted to vote during the Indonesian elections but the law prohibited them. For this reason, I argue that the issue of citizenship should be considered as limiting the Indonesian diaspora's participation in voting for Indonesian parliamentary members and president while it does not eliminate their interest in participating in their homeland electoral political processes. For practical reason, within this section I will only discuss how the Indonesian citizens in diaspora participated in casting votes during the 2014 Indonesian national elections.

Some members of the Indonesian diaspora who participated with the homeland election performed different activist tasks related to the voting. Volunteers on the voting organizer committees, the Overseas Voting Committee (*Panitia Pemilihan Luar Negeri*, PPLN), tended to be fairly active in terms of involvement in the home country's election. Since the main duty of PPLN members was to organize the voting processes, starting from collecting information related to potential voters on to reporting the final ballot count to the National Election Commission in Jakarta, their activities were rather associated with voluntarism rather than compelled by personal political motives. Becoming a member of PPLN also meant that they were not allowed to explicitly express their political opinions when they were undertaking the voting processes, which might influence the process as well as the output of the election in diaspora. Despite this rule, some Indonesian diaspora still posted criticism of the PPLN committee members concerning the voting affair.

When I was invited to a PPLN meeting, several members disclosed that they were underpaid by the Indonesian government to organize the election but it would not prevent



them from helping people in diaspora to vote. Moreover, they argued their professionalism was needed for the success of the voting processes, so they should ignore any difficulties regarding the budget issue. Moreover, since to be involved in voting was voluntary in nature, this principle was also applied to their decision to participate with the voting committees.



*Figure 7. 2.* The 2014 Indonesian Presidential Election Ballot. There were two pairs of candidates for the President and Vice President seats. The first pair, Prabowo Subianto and Hatta Rajasa took the serial number 1, while the second pair, Joko Widodo and Jusuf Kalla, were assigned the serial number 2.

Another form of participation in the voting processes during the election in diaspora required going to the designated location to vote on the D-day. Since the voting day was usually on weekdays, it required some sacrifice for diaspora to be able to get to

the voting place, usually the Indonesian Embassy and Consulates. Some members of diaspora reported they were unable to come on the day of the voting since because of time constraints (many people worked during the week and could not get the day off), by distance (home was far away from the voting venues), or it simply was not convenient. PPLN offered these diasporans other options. For registered voters who could not come on voting day PPLN offered to mail the ballot to them. These voters were then required to return the ballot in person to the designated places or mail it back on particular days before the final day of the election. This minimized the number of diaspora who were excluded from the voting.

There were differences in voter behavior by the level of diaspora participation between the legislative and presidential elections. People in diaspora were more enthusiastic about voting for the president than for parliamentary candidates (“Tinggi, Partisipasi,” 2014). As reported by Andang, the head of PPLN in Washington, D. C., people who voted for president exceeded those who voted for legislative members. Several arguments offered by members of diaspora could be used to interpret this phenomenon. First, the physical displacement from the home country contributed to the diasporans’ unfamiliarity with the potential parliamentary candidates, thus preventing them from further participating in the voting processes. Some Indonesian diaspora complained that they did not even know those people who ran for parliamentary seats. A few candidates were familiar since they appeared on Indonesian media, but the majority of the parliamentary member candidates remained anonymous for people in diaspora. Second, most Indonesians did not really trust either political parties or parliamentary



members. A survey conducted by Transparency International (2013) on a corruption barometer in Indonesia reported that the majority of the respondents said parliament (89%) and political party (81%) were the second and third most corrupted institutions in the country, exceeded only by the national police (91%). Consequently, public perception of these political institutions remained low, and this issue discouraged people in diaspora from further engaging in the legislative election.

Diaspora participation in voting escalated during the presidential election. There were several reasons for this, also. First, there were only two candidates running for the presidential seat. One candidate, Jokowi, had been considered a media darling since Indonesian media tended to cover him in a positive tone ever since he was elected the Mayor of Solo a few years earlier. He became the Governor of Jakarta in 2012 before he ran for president (Wulandari, 2014). Similarly, Tapsell (2014) wrote that, “internal data from twenty-four-hour national news stations MetroTV and TVOne shows that when Jokowi is on the news, the ratings surge, while other political stories, especially corruption stories, cause viewers to switch channels” (para. 13). Tapsell further discussed how the ‘Jokowi effect’ should be counted as a major factor in contemporary Indonesian politics, which provides hope for the country’s future since Jokowi has been represented as ‘a down-to-earth politician.’ This resonated as one of the reasons people in diaspora decided to become involved in the election. As Fifi, an Indonesian diasporan in Virginia, explained:

Basically, I don’t really like politics. I even am rarely involved in political discussion. But this time, it’s different. I believe Jokowi will bring progress to

Indonesian politics. He's one of the reasons why I voted in this presidential election. (personal communication, February 8, 2015)

A similar reason was given by Hakim, an overseas Indonesian in Los Angeles. As he explained:

Honestly, I was a *golput* (non-voter) while I was in Indonesia and while I've been here. I've always been a *golput* during the elections. For me, no matter who were the candidates, they were all the same. Only in this current election I cast a vote. Frankly, for this election I voted for Jokowi, only for one reason: humanity. One day, I read news on the Internet. On Facebook, there was a person who shared news about Jokowi, during time he was the Governor of Jakarta. He gave a visit to an area in Northern Jakarta. He saw a 2x2 meter of *rumah petak* (a compartment house built by the poor people, usually made of boards or other cheap materials) lived in by seven people. Can you imagine how a house that small was lived in by seven people? It's so inhumane. Here, I saw that Jokowi has a high level of humanity since he cared about these people. I think, he must be *orang baik* (a good guy). (personal communication, December 19, 2014)

The other president candidate, Prabowo, also had an interesting story. As explained by some Indonesian diaspora, supported by his own political party, Gerindra, Prabowo could embrace a significant number of supporters from other parties who joined his coalition, such as President Yudhoyono's Partai Demokrat, former President Suharto's party of Golkar as well as the Islamic party of PKS. Coming from a military background, Prabowo took advantage of his father's name, Sumitro Djojohadikusumo,

who was a prominent economist in Indonesia (Aspinall, 2015). Some diasporans, who disclosed that they were supporters of Prabowo, argued that his figure was more nationalist and more promising as a future leader of Indonesia, in addition to endorsing his vision of creating Indonesia as one of the leading countries in Southeast Asia. On one hand, as a Muslim presidential candidate he received an endorsement from Islamic parties like PKS, which gave him wider support among the Indonesian Muslim diaspora. On the other hand, he used ethno-religious sentiments, such as highlighting the fact that Prabowo's mother was a Minahasan Christian, so many members of the Christian and Minahasan diaspora, mainly in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, felt highly encouraged to vote for this candidate.

Meanwhile, Debbie, a Jokowi supporter, explained that this presidential election was the most determining moment for Indonesian politics since she could not imagine what would happen to the country if Prabowo became president. For her, voting for Jokowi was a matter of 'do or die.' In Debbie's argument, even though Prabowo gained a wide support from various ethno-religious groups in diaspora, some people were still afraid that he might be a bad influence on the future of Indonesian politics. Prabowo was said to be involved in several human rights violation cases. Moreover, van Klinken (2014) even mentioned that not only had Prabowo been affiliated with the kidnaping of student activists during the May 1998 Riot in Jakarta but he was also responsible for the massacre of hundreds of people in the counter-insurgency mission of the Indonesian army in East Timor back in 1983. A former student activist, Debbie strongly opposed Prabowo and even worked to persuade her relatives in Indonesia not to vote for him. Moreover,

Debbie admitted that she did not really care if her political choice would invite criticism from her friends in diaspora who supported the opposing political figure.

To some extent, the 2014 Indonesian presidential election has provided a more nuanced understanding of how the Indonesian diaspora were encouraged to engage in this transnational-homeland political process. As mentioned previously, prior to this election, the long-distance electoral participation of the Indonesian diaspora had been relatively low. For example, it was found that in the 2009 national election only 23% of more than two million Indonesian diaspora voted (Faizal, 2014). The intricacies between supporters of the two opposing presidential candidates during the 2014 Presidential Election, as illustrated above, should be noted as another important factor that encouraged Indonesian diaspora both in Washington, D. C. and in Los Angeles to engage in the election. The same phenomenon also occurred in the homeland, where the tensions between the supporters of both presidential candidates became a common feature in the social media pages of many Indonesians. Eventually, this would lead to the emergence of the same sentiment among people in diaspora, as expressed by many of my informants. It is true that political developments in the home country have been argued by Østergaard-Nielsen (2003b) as one of the determining factors of transnational political participation. Unfortunately, in the case of the Indonesian diaspora's engagement in the 2014 Indonesian presidential election, the influence was not always positive.

Overall, I found that people in diaspora tended to maintain a distance from Indonesian political parties except with the presidential candidates. Not only did party identification become less prominent, as members of diaspora supporting presidential

candidates but not those candidates' political parties, the role of candidate appeal was found to be more important for people in diaspora. This decision was reasonable since, as explained by Aspinall (2014), the current Indonesian electoral system is becoming more candidate-centered rather than party-centered, and this trend has resulted in the declining relevance of party ID during the electoral processes. From my interviews with members of diaspora, I learned this was one of the primary reasons transnational Indonesians in the US were more willing to participate in the 2014 Indonesian presidential election rather than in the legislative election. From this perspective, I suggest that this study of Indonesian diaspora's voting behavior can be regarded as providing a more nuanced understanding when compared to previous research on Indonesian voter behavior (Fukuoka & na Thalang, 2014; Higashikata & Kawamura, 2015; Mujani & Liddle, 2010), especially by taking the case of displaced nationals' long-distance electoral participation as one of the focuses of the study.

### **Indonesian Diaspora's Non-Electoral Political Participation**

**Engagement in diaspora-homeland associations.** During my fieldwork, I found that ethnic association was considered by many members of the Indonesian diaspora as an important venue where they could develop their sense of community, especially based on their ethnicity or their place of origin. As in the case of transnational Indonesians in New York City, where ethnic association was found by Widjanarko (2007) to be flexible in terms of its membership, in addition to its irregular meetings and activities, Indonesians' ethnic-based organizations in Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles exhibited a similar nature. For these members of the Indonesian diaspora, any organization or club

based on ethnicity, hometown, or place of origin, merely functioned for them to maintain ties with people with similar background. Most of the activities of ethnic associations of the Indonesian diaspora were focused more on civic engagement, such as arranging charity events, organizing cultural performances and culinary bazars, and even hosting picnics for its members.

Nevertheless, while not all the activities of the ethnic associations of the Indonesian diaspora, both in Washington, D. C. and in Los Angeles, were directly affiliated with transnational political participation, the trend of community-gathering surrounding ethnic sentiment could also promote their sense of political awareness. In some cases, civic participation of the Indonesian diaspora associated with an ethnic association eventually turned into a non-electoral political engagement. For instance, as mentioned by Indonesian diaspora who joined *Kawanua USA*, an ethnic Minahasan community, they had a tendency to engage in several politics-related activities when presidential candidate Prabowo was represented as having Minahasan heritage since his mother was a Minahasan. Following this line of reasoning, Indonesian diaspora's engagement in *Kawanua USA* would eventually lead to further involvement in the homeland political sphere when they found there were some political issues that (re)connected them with their ethnicity. Therefore, civic participation of the Indonesian diaspora who were involved in such ethnic association was transformed into electoral political participation; and thus, this association encouraged them to further engage in the homeland electoral processes, such as campaigning and voting for particular candidates.

Meanwhile, a different attitude was exhibited by people who joined ethnic associations that did not directly correlate with Indonesian national politics. For instance, some members of *Rumpun Wargi Pasundan* (the Sundanese Association) in Washington, D. C. felt they did not have a personal attachment to any particular politicians during the Indonesian national elections in 2014. For this reason, they reported that they had a higher degree of flexibility in choosing whether to support particular politicians who ran for the elections. Nevertheless, I still found that they were highly enthusiastic when talking about Indonesian politics. Yusi, a member of *Rumpun Wargi Pasundan*, said that she would vote for Jokowi, an ethnic Javanese, for Indonesian president in the 2014 election but not because of his ethnicity. However, if there were a candidate who shared her same ethnicity, she might vote for that particular person if she thought that he or she was better than Jokowi. Yusi further explained that she was hoping that Ridwan Kamil, the current Mayor of Bandung, would run for Indonesian president sometimes in the future. If this ethnic-Sundanese politician became an Indonesian presidential candidate, Yusi said that she would definitely vote for him.

Beyond the ethnicity attachment, the Indonesian diaspora were also involved in religion-based affiliations. While the IMAAM Center as one of the very first Indonesian mosques in the US was only established in 2014, the Indonesian Muslim diaspora in the Washington, D. C. metropolitan area had already formed IMAAM as an association years before they had their own religious venue. Unlike ethnic associations, I found that religious diaspora organizations like IMAAM could unite different members of diaspora from various ethnic backgrounds. Members of this association came from different

ethnicities, such as Javanese, Sundanese, Minang, and Betawi, as well as various socio-economic levels. In addition to serving religious purposes, IMAAM practically functions like any other diaspora organization. Not only did they serve the members in diaspora, but on many occasions, this association also performed transnational-homeland activism, such as sending money from *zakat* (compulsory payment), donations and charity to people and development projects in Indonesia.

Discussion about Indonesian politics was a common feature of the activities performed by members of diaspora in IMAAM. Similar to the case of ethnic associations, I found that most of the IMAAM members were really eager to talk about political developments in Indonesia. However, there was a division among the members in terms of their political attitude during the presidential election period. In one of the community meetings in IMAAM, Mahmud, one of my informants explained the paradox:

Sometimes, I found that these people's attitude toward Indonesian politics is rather funny. Previously, they were complaining about (former) President SBY's performance. But when SBY came to IMAAM to inaugurate this mosque, many of them were competing to kiss his hand. Right now, they're criticizing President Jokowi. I am pretty sure that they will also be competing to shake Jokowi's hand when he comes to the US. (personal communication, March 8, 2015)

A much more inclusive association in diaspora also encouraged many overseas Indonesians to a more visible transnational political participation. This was the case of nationalist-based associations in diaspora, such as the IDN (the Indonesian Diaspora Network), *Permias* (*Persatuan Mahasiswa Indonesia di Amerika Serikat*, the Association



of Indonesian Students in the US) and the American Chapter of *ILUNI (Ikatan Alumni Universitas Indonesia*, the Association for University of Indonesia Alumni). The IDN, founded in the Congress of Indonesian Diaspora in Los Angeles in 2012, is among the newest formal associations of Indonesian diaspora in the US. Moreover, this association had been joined by members of the Indonesian diaspora from different ethno-religious backgrounds; and thus enriched its activities in terms of transnational political participation. Even though the idea of forming this organization was thought to have emerged from the community—highlighting the practice of ‘transnationalism from below’—it was support from the Indonesian Ambassador to the US at that time, Dino Patti Djalal, who was argued by many of my informants to be the motivating factor for the establishment of this Indonesian diaspora association. Eventually, Ambassador Dino was considered by these overseas Indonesians as the ‘father of Indonesian diaspora.’ Therefore, it was difficult to ignore the feature of ‘transnationalism from above’ exhibited by the IDN’s activities, especially those related to political matters.

Having a direct relationship with the homeland government’s representatives in diaspora, IDN could optimize its mission of disseminating the Indonesian diaspora’s development agendas. For various activities, the IDN was even supported by the Indonesian government. This relationship had resulted in both positive and negative impacts on public opinion toward the IDN. For some diasporans, it would help the IDN persuade the Indonesian government in accommodating key issues and suggestions offered by IDN members in terms of development projects in the home country. For some others, since the IDN was seen as being too close to the Indonesian state

representatives, this relationship was considered as possibly increasing the dependency of the IDN upon the homeland government. A much more cynical judgment from the members of diaspora came from people who even accused the IDN of being the mouthpiece of the Indonesian government. Joe, for example, explained that this was especially the case when Ambassador Dino resigned his position at the Indonesian embassy in Washington, D. C. and later joined the presidential candidate convention held by Partai Demokrat, an Indonesian political party formed by the incumbent President Yudhoyono. Joe reported that some people in diaspora feared that Ambassador Dino would use the IDN as his political vehicle to run for the presidency in the 2014 election.

Nevertheless, as argued by the IDN Global President, Mohamad Al-Arief, IDN has never been a political organization or a vehicle for individual political interests. However, he would still permit IDN members to freely express their political opinions, such as voting for a particular party or candidate during the elections, as long as they did not use the IDN name for their political purposes. Moreover, IDN encouraged its members to develop ‘political-literacy’ especially about the homeland political sphere. Al-Arief suggested that all Indonesians in diaspora be more aware and literate about Indonesian politics since this would both directly and indirectly influence the livelihood of overseas Indonesians.

A similar opinion was expressed by Priyo, a founding member of the IDN. He explained that, “In the last few years, Indonesian diaspora’s attention to various issues in Indonesia has been growing. Consequently, Indonesian government should also become more open to the diaspora’s voices.” Priyo further argued the time had come that the

Indonesian diaspora be more involved in the homeland political processes, especially in influencing policy-making directly associated with Indonesians in diaspora since nowadays the homeland government tended to be more willing to listen to the voices of those people. For Priyo, Indonesia diaspora's political participation should never be limited to just participating in the homeland elections but should be expanded to include how they could fight for their political opinions beyond the election. He also considered IDN to be one of the leading associations for the Indonesian diaspora that could help him fight for his development agendas related to the livelihood of Indonesians in diaspora.

**Lobbying and campaigning for homeland political issues.** I first met Dutamardin Umar, one of the prominent *tokoh masyarakat* (public figures, opinion leaders) among the Indonesian diaspora in the US, when I visited IMAAM Center in Fall, 2014. I did not have a chance to introduce myself to him at that time. However, I learned about him from many members of the Indonesian diaspora who encouraged me to talk to him about my research. They told me that because he was one of the founders of this Indonesian Muslim community he frequently came to the IMAAM mosque in Silver Spring, Maryland, even though he lives in Sterling, Virginia. Moreover, he was also the co-founder of the US branch of ICMI (*Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia*, the Association for Indonesian Muslim Scholars) and an active member of the IMSA (the Indonesian Muslim Society in America). His involvement in various Muslim diaspora organizations illustrates his status as a prominent advocate for Indonesian Muslim diaspora activities. Originally from West Sumatra, he was involved in the establishment of the Minang USA, an association for Indonesians who came from West Sumatra. After

spending more than 20 years in the US, it was only natural to find him attached to the livelihood of the Indonesian diaspora in this country. For this reason, Dutamardin began to nourish his interest in various political issues concerning Indonesians in the US, especially in the Washington, D. C. metropolitan area. Eventually, this interest led him to be further involved in the establishment of an informal ‘political’ organization called the KBRI (*Kedutaan Besar Republik Indonesia*, the Indonesian Embassy) Watch. This organization has a primary aim to monitor the performance of Indonesian diplomats, sometimes acting as a watch dog for these homeland government’s representatives in diaspora, especially when there are rumors about corruption scandals. Later, Dutamardin joined other members of the Indonesian diaspora to form the IDN in 2012.

I had my first personal contact with him through Facebook. After I explained my research project to him, he agreed to meet me in person. Eventually, I told him that I aimed to explore the Indonesian diaspora’s political engagement in Indonesian politics, and he asked whether I was interested in joining him for a meeting with the IDN’s Global President, Muhamad Al-Arief. I accepted his invitation and later we exchanged phone numbers and I asked him for the date and time of his meeting with Al-Arief. He said to meet him in the IMAAM mosque at 9 o’clock in the morning on March 22, 2015.

At the IMAAM Center, I joined him briefly for a gathering with some IMAAM board members. When Al-Arief arrived, Dutamardin introduced me and we soon decided to change our meeting place to a quieter place. “Today, we’re going to discuss the IDN’s agendas related to the issues of dual-citizenship and *Dapil Luar Negeri* (Overseas Voting Bloc),” he explained purpose of his meeting with the IDN president. He considered it was

not conducive to discuss these issues in IMAAM. Later, Al-Arief drove us to a McDonald's, only five minutes away, where we could have small snacks during the meeting. Priyo, also one of the initiators of both the IDN and the KBRI Watch, joined us for the meeting.

They shared their stories about how IDN members had already developed political lobbies to persuade both the Indonesian government and parliamentary members to support the Dual-Citizenship for Indonesian Diaspora Bill. Dutamardin explained that on his latest visit to Jakarta, he had met with several parliamentary members who agreed to support the IDN's missions. He also shared the progress report of the writing of *naskah akademik* (academic papers) to support the bill following the IDN's presentations about dual-citizenship in several universities throughout Indonesia. The idea was to spread awareness of the urgency of dual-citizenship for diaspora to the academia in Indonesia, and eventually, IDN members hoped that these people would also support this mission. Dutamardin and Al-Arief both argued that directly approaching politicians and academia through direct communication was, to some extent, a more effective political lobby compared to mediatized communication. By lobbying and meeting the homeland politicians face to face, it was easier for IDN members to convince these policy-makers that members of diaspora should also be included in the Indonesian political processes, especially in the case of promoting the dual-citizenship bill. For this reason, the IDN opened a branch office in Jakarta, which would help this organization maintain direct constant communication with the Indonesian government and politicians in order to push its political agenda.

Al-Arief shared the story about his recent visit to the home country. In addition to preparation for the third Congress of Indonesian Diaspora in Jakarta in the upcoming August, he had been approached by several Indonesian media asking for interviews on topics related to the Indonesian diaspora. Based on his experience with interviews of this kind, he argued that nowadays, Indonesian media are more open and more willing to listen to the voice of diaspora. Al-Arief thought that this welcoming sign from the Indonesian media should be seen as beneficial in supporting awareness of the general public in Indonesia about the increasing importance of diaspora for the homeland. Further to this point, he mentioned that *SWA* magazine even devoted a special edition to the Indonesian diaspora where he found that this Indonesian publication also highlighted some arguments that paralleled the idea that overseas Indonesians had a huge potential benefit in supporting the homeland from afar. Afterwards, Al-Arief briefly shared information concerning one of the IDN's plans to meet with the editors in chief of several Indonesian media organizations prior to the congress in Jakarta. He considered it one of the important strategies in mainstreaming the issue of diaspora to a wider public in Indonesia.

In addition to the discussion about political lobbies for dual-citizenship, the IDN members were also preparing to promote the idea of the Overseas Voting Bloc. This issue had previously been brought to the Constitution Court in Jakarta, but unfortunately, it was rejected. Taking the case of the current national election in 2014, Al-Arief argued that there is still a need to create a specific voting bloc for the Indonesian diaspora, mainly for those who still have their voting rights. Even though there was an increase in

terms of the number of diaspora who participated in the elections, he considered the figure to be relatively small compared to the total population of global Indonesian diaspora. Al-Arief further explained his opinion concerning this matter:

I think we need to enlighten those political parties in Indonesia that there is a huge potential of voters in diaspora. There are at least 2.2 million potential voters overseas, while in the latest presidential election we had only around 700,000 people who cast votes. This number should be considered low. I argued that political participations of diaspora were low since there was no representation for diaspora within the politics and elections. Now we should start to think about diaspora as a huge voting bloc that needs to be seriously considered by Indonesian politicians. (personal communication, March 22, 2015)

Another problem was that, as mentioned by Al-Arief, many Indonesian diaspora were unfamiliar with the candidates who ran for the elections, especially for the parliamentary seats. Typically, people in diaspora could only recognize the few candidates who were frequently exposed by mass media. Moreover, the current election system only included Indonesian overseas to vote for the Jakarta voting bloc, which was regarded as unfair by many Indonesian diaspora. "If our votes went for a candidate in Jakarta, there's no guarantee that this particular candidate would fight for us or even understand the complex problems experienced by Indonesians in diaspora," Priyo offered his analysis. Many Indonesian diaspora expected that by having their own voting bloc, it would encourage people who are considered as the representatives of the members of

diaspora to run for election, and thus, would increase the chance of having their political voice to be heard by the homeland government.

Overall, the discussion was thoughtful and provided me with a better understanding of how these IDN members exemplified their transnational political participation. Experienced in working at global institutions like the World Bank, Al-Arief offered a smart and critical critique of how the Indonesian diaspora should be more literate about Indonesian politics. Similarly, Priyo, who earned his PhD from George Washington University, exhibited a similar attitude. In my understanding, the members of the Indonesian diaspora felt they were highly encouraged to expand their knowledge about what is currently happening in the homeland political sphere; not so much about the minute details in every political matter, but more about having a general understanding of how policy-making processes in Indonesia could have a major impact on the livelihood of overseas Indonesians. In doing so, although some members of the Indonesian diaspora's access to homeland political news might be limited, they argued that these people could still develop various strategies to constantly monitor political developments in the homeland. For instance, Al-Arief explained that, "Every day, I try to spend half an hour reading news recaps from one particular day through my smart phone once I return home from work." In this sense, it can be argued that Al-Arief's experience resonates with the practice of media use for transnational-homeland political engagement demonstrated by people in diaspora as was discussed in the previous chapter.

One important trend that I noticed from the mode of transnational political participation demonstrated by the Indonesian diaspora in both the Washington, D. C. and



the Los Angeles metropolitan areas was that they tried to elaborate their passive participations, such as consuming Indonesian political news, with more active and concrete political activism. In Priyo's case, he even registered himself as a candidate for the KPK (*Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi*, Corruption Eradication Commission) in Indonesia. He returned to Jakarta to join the selection process for several weeks, but unfortunately, he did not succeed. Some members of the Indonesian diaspora like Priyo, Dutamardin, and Al-Arief had demonstrated a rather distinct transnational political engagement. Not only by reading news about political developments in the homeland while living in diaspora, these Indonesian diaspora activists were also regularly gathering to discuss home country politics, approaching government representatives in diaspora, visiting the homeland to lobby Indonesian politicians and policy-makers, and developing networks with Indonesian media to disseminate their agendas about diaspora to a wider audience. Indeed, mediatized political participation in diaspora became more intertwined with non-mediatized political engagement. Mediatization of politics in diaspora, to some degree, was being extended to more direct political activism in the homeland. But in the end, media were still needed by the Indonesian diaspora to reach out to wider public participation in regards to their own diaspora politics. However, some members of diaspora argued that we should not ignore the fact that these kinds of political practices were still dominated by a small number of elites, and thus, might exclude many ordinary members of the Indonesian diaspora to perform such extensive transnational political engagement.

A similar mode of transnational-homeland political engagement was demonstrated by the Indonesian diaspora when they were involved in the practices of online campaign for various Indonesian political issues. Since many of the members of diaspora were able to maintain regular consumption of Indonesian political news, they tended to be emotionally, rather than rationally, tied to the political developments of the home country. This kind of attachment was created by the sense of living in a borderless state, enabled by the easy access to homeland media content from diaspora. To some extent, this access would further encourage the Indonesian diaspora to express their political opinion as feedback of their consumption of Indonesian political news. In doing so, they became more involved in campaigning or supporting homeland political agendas, mainly through online and social media.

For example, when Indonesian media frequently published news related to how KPK was being ‘politically attacked’ by the Indonesian national police—thought by the public discouraged corruption eradication efforts—many Indonesians interpreted this issue as a political dispute between KPK and Polri (*Kepolisian Republik Indonesia*, the Indonesian National Police). The conflict started when on January 9, 2015, a police general, Budi Gunawan, was nominated by Jokowi’s government as the sole candidate for National Police Chief. His name had been approved by the parliament, as well. However, in the following days, KPK announced that Gunawan was involved in a corruption scandal, and recommended the president halt the inauguration. In the subsequent week, police arrested the Deputy Chief of KPK, Bambang Widjojanto with an accusation of giving a false statement during a constitutional court back in 2010 related to

a local election case in Kotawaringin Barat, Central Kalimantan. Nevertheless, the Indonesian public were unconvinced by the police story and believed that Widjojanto's arrest was aimed at intervening with the KPK investigation of Gunawan (Trianita, 2015). Encouraged by the feeling they should defend the KPK as the leading symbol of the fight against corruption in Indonesia, some Indonesians began to show support by demonstrating in front of KPK headquarter in Jakarta (Sufa, 2015). Apparently, this political support not only happened offline, since many people showed their support for KPK online, mainly in social media using hashtag #Save KPK—which became a trending topic worldwide at that time (Deliusno, 2015).

Eventually, this trend spread to the Indonesian diaspora in various countries, including the US. Some members of the Indonesian diaspora, following the political tension between KPK and Polri, also expressed their political opinion online. In addition to changing their avatar or profile picture to 'Save KPK,' they organized a small march to support KPK. For instance, Joe and his colleagues invited the Indonesian diaspora in the Washington, D. C. metropolitan area through their Facebook pages to hold a demonstration to support KPK in front of the Capitol on January 25, 2015. Even though this event was joined by fewer than a dozen members of the Indonesian diaspora, the picture of the demonstration circulated through social media, and thus, was exposed to a much wider audience. Moreover, Shobib, a foreign correspondent of an Indonesian online news portal, *Detik.com* in Washington, D. C. wrote an article about the march, which, too, circulated by members of the Indonesian diaspora through social media following the publication. This would help dissemination of the political message not only to

Indonesians in diaspora but also to audiences in the home country. For this reason, there was a sense that the use of media had encouraged a more active long-distance political engagement where Indonesians in diaspora did not have to be passive consumers of Indonesian political news only, but to some extent, could play the role of active players in performing their own distinct political activism from diaspora, aiming for participation in the homeland political sphere.

**Attending politics-related public meeting.** In addition to Indonesian diaspora's involvement in various diaspora-homeland associations, these displaced nationals were also attending various public talks or discussions related to contemporary political issues in Indonesia. Diasporic spaces, such as the Indonesian Embassy, the Consulate Office and the IMAAM mosque, became the primary physical locations for Indonesian diaspora to gather for such homeland political discussion. During my fieldwork, I encountered at least two major occasions where the Embassy as well as the IMAAM center hosted public events that enabled Indonesian diaspora to engage in transnational-homeland political engagement.

On May 20, 2015, the IDN held a public discussion in the Presidential Ballroom of the Indonesian Embassy in Washington, D. C. to promote Indonesian diaspora awareness about the dual-citizenship issue. In the past few years, as explained by Al-Arief, the IDN's Global President, this organization had started the initiation to put political pressure on the Indonesian government to allow the second-generation foreign-born Indonesian diaspora to obtain and maintain Indonesian citizenship in addition to the citizenship of their birth-country that had already been given by the host country's

government. IDN also encouraged the Indonesian government to include in the discussion those Indonesian diaspora who had previously changed their citizenship, especially by supporting the Indonesian citizenship law that would permit these people to regain and hold their Indonesian passports. In doing so, this organization attempted to push the homeland government to create a specific bill called *Rancangan Undang-Undang Dwi-Kewarganegaraan* (the Dual-Citizenship Bill) that would officially recognize this practice of dual-citizenship of the Indonesian diaspora. Al-Arief further explained, if granted by both the Indonesian government and the parliamentary, this bill eventually would ratify the current Indonesian Citizenship Act of 2006. The problem was, not only were the Indonesian diaspora less aware of this issue but many Indonesian politicians were also unfamiliar with it. As a result, as stated by Al-Arief, this diaspora association would strongly support the Indonesian diaspora's transnational political participation in mainstreaming this particular issue to a wider public as well as pushing it to the homeland government. Fortunately, the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Indonesian Embassy, was more than willing to facilitate the public meeting to discuss about this dual-citizenship matter.

The discussion was attended by dozens of Indonesian diaspora from the Washington, D. C. metropolitan area. As the organizer, the IDN was joined by its members who came from various places, such as California, Texas and Jakarta. IDN also invited key speakers from Indonesian government representatives, such as the Justice and Human Rights Minister Yasonna Laoly, and Wahid Supriadi from the Diaspora Desk of

the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in addition to Satya Arinanto, a professor of Indonesian constitutional law.



*Figure 7. 3. Indonesian diaspora meeting at the Embassy of Indonesia, Washington, D. C. on May 20, 2015 to discuss the strategies for pushing the Indonesian government and lawmakers to implement Undang-Undang Dwi-Kewarganegaran (the Dual-citizenship Law).*

During the session, the speakers took turns in presenting their opinions about the possibility of the dual-citizenship implementation for the Indonesian diaspora as well as what kind of challenges would emerge during the process. For example, Minister Laoly said that even though he personally agreed with the idea of allowing the Indonesian diaspora to have more than single citizenship, there might be a lot of Indonesian

politicians who would not be keen to support the bill. When Shohib, one of the attendances, asked why the Indonesian government was not really eager to promote the bill, the Minister explained:

The main issue is about nationalism. Those diaspora who previously discarded their Indonesian citizenship would be asked, “Where is their *nationalism*?” Indonesians’ public opinion about this issue is quite varied, and not many of these people are open-minded. I think we should optimize the use of media, invite *Mata Najwa* or *Kick Andy* (two popular TV talk shows in Indonesia) to expose the fight of diaspora. Provide figures, numbers, and proof of contributions of diaspora to the homeland, how and why. Nationalism is a sensitive issue. For me, dual-citizenship is a personal matter. One of my children was born in the US. Just now, my daughter who is a permanent resident in Australia contacted me through *WhatsApp* asking me to fight for dual-citizenship since her two children are with her in Australia and presumably when they became adults they would eventually become Australian citizens. In Indonesia, there are many ultra nationalist political parties, and thus, our job is how to explain this issue to them, and clarify that the Indonesian diaspora are not only TKI (*Tenaga Kerja Indonesia*, the Indonesian Migrant Workers). (personal communication, May 20, 2015)

Many of the Indonesian diaspora who came to the meeting shared their difficulties of living abroad, where at some point they had to sacrifice their Indonesian citizenship, mainly for economic reasons. By direct meeting, doing a face-to-face communication with the Minister, they expected this encounter would increase the chance that the



homeland government would better understand this issue. They further argued that in the past it was extremely rare to have such a medium to directly communicate the political voice of the Indonesian diaspora abroad to the policy-makers in the homeland. Thus, this kind of public meeting with Indonesian politicians should be seen as an important venue for transnational political engagement of the Indonesian diaspora.

However, during the discussion, in addition to Ministry Laoly, some other speakers shared their concern that many people in Indonesia still consider those who discarded their Indonesian citizenship were not nationalists. They also mentioned that Indonesians who could live abroad were often considered luckier than those who could not, especially since the majority of Indonesians could never even imagine themselves going and living abroad, mainly due to financial barriers. Eventually, they argued that this fact would make the general public in Indonesia less supportive of the idea of dual-citizenship for the Indonesian diaspora. Therefore, as emphasized by Minister Laoly, the role of the media became significant for this reason. He further explained that the key issue was how to mainstream the diaspora or how to make the Indonesian diaspora issue a mainstream discourse in Indonesian media. According to the minister, by mainstreaming diaspora in the homeland media, it can be expected that this topic eventually will become more popular among Indonesian politicians and the general public. In the long run, public discussion through media might help decrease the hostile attitude of Indonesian nationals in the homeland toward both the Indonesian diaspora and the idea of giving dual-citizenship to these overseas (former) Indonesians.



Meanwhile on another occasion, on May 31, 2015, the IMAAM Center collaborated with the Indonesian Embassy to host a public meeting with the Mayor of Bandung, Ridwan Kamil, during one of his visits to several cities in the US. Initially, there was no official announcement from Ridwan Kamil or the Embassy about this meeting. However, the rumor had been spreading among the members of the Indonesian diaspora in the Washington, D. C. metropolitan area, saying that Ridwan Kamil would come to the city. The circulation of this information was prominent mainly on Facebook and *WhatsApp* groups of Indonesian diaspora in this metropolitan location. Eventually, in the following days, the Embassy officially announced that Ridwan Kamil would meet with members of diaspora despite his tight schedule. IMAAM mosque was selected as the meeting venue since Ridwan Kamil had said he wanted to learn more about how the Indonesian Muslim diaspora in Washington, D. C. organized its community activities, in particular the Indonesian diaspora's madrasah (Islamic Sunday school for children).

The meeting was scheduled at two hours before a previously-scheduled event at the IMAAM mosque. On the same day as the meeting, IMAAM was also scheduled for a public lecture by popular Indonesian Muslim scholar, Abdullah Gymnastiar—who was just like the mayor, also a Sundanese and from Bandung. During the opening speech, Bambang, the moderator, even joked that the day was a special event for the Sundanese diaspora in Washington, D. C. since they had the privilege to meet directly with these two prominent figures from their hometown. Nevertheless, people who came to the discussion were not limited to Sundanese since those who came from different ethnicities were also still eager to attend.



*Figure 7. 4.* Ridwan Kamil, the Mayor of Bandung, presenting his political-development achievements to members of Indonesian Muslim diaspora in the IMAAM Mosque, Washington, D. C. metropolitan area. The meeting was held on May 31, 2015.

The mayor started his speech by saying that at one time he was also a member of the Indonesian diaspora. He shared the story of when he first came to the US at the end of the 1990s to work at an architecture firm with his fellow Indonesian diaspora in Baltimore, Maryland. He moved to New York City in the following year, and eventually continued his studies at the University of California, Berkeley from 1999 to 2001. On one hand, spending some years in the US allowed the mayor to share many similarities with the members of the Indonesian diaspora. On the other hand, people who came to the meeting considered that Ridwan Kamil could, to some extent, understand how it felt to be an Indonesian living far away from the home country. Therefore, when the mayor presented his political messages to the audiences, mainly about his development projects

in Bandung called Innovating Bandung, the attendances were very enthusiastic to listen to his presentation.

This was a rare occasion since Indonesians were often inattentive when listening to Indonesian politicians giving lectures about their political achievements. They tended to be easily bored or did not trust the political speeches. However, I found that Ridwan Kamil was an exception that day. The person who sat next to me gave him a compliment, “From his presentation, I can see that he’s a smart young guy. I believe that he will make Bandung a better city in the future.” During the discussion, some people were taking pictures of the meeting, while others were recording the speech on their smart phones, which they would later post on social media. At the end of the presentation, Ridwan Kamil invited members of the Indonesian diaspora to contribute to the development projects in Bandung, at least by visiting their hometown to see how their former home had changed, in a better way.

Apparently, many members of the Indonesian diaspora, especially the ethnic-Sundanese, revealed that they were attracted to attend the meeting with Ridwan Kamil for one specific reason: ethnicity. For example, Yusi, who originally came from Garut, but went into a college in Bandung, felt that she had a strong connection with Ridwan Kamil as the Mayor of Bandung. Moreover, she had been following his tweeter account for a while, even before he was elected mayor in 2013. Therefore, when she heard the news that the mayor would visit Washington, D. C., she could not hide her happiness at meeting with her favorite local Sundanese politician. Even though she was nine-months pregnant at that time, she insisted on coming to the meeting, accompanied by her husband

and her two children. Yusi's effort paid off when she finally succeeded in taking a photo with the mayor, and later uploaded the photo into her social media pages.

Similarly, Hari, also a Sundanese diasporan, who was never interested in Indonesian politics, were eager to meet the mayor. Earlier in the morning, one of Hari's friends who works as a journalist for *VoA* sent him a *WhatsApp* message, inviting Hari to accompany him to meet with Ridwan Kamil at the National Mall. As a close friend of Ridwan Kamil, this journalist was asked by the mayor to join him for a morning bike-ride around the Mall, where later Hari joined in. Afterwards, he took a smiley photo with the mayor and shared the picture with me through *WhatsApp* before he posted the photo to his social media pages. He felt so happy and proud that he finally could meet with a good politician from his hometown and was even able to take a picture with him. Eventually, this would lead to his increasing interest keeping himself more update with local political issues in Bandung.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I have discussed how transnational-homeland political participation of the Indonesian diaspora in the US has been exemplified in the two different modes of political participation. First, the electoral political participation; which is associated with long-distance political activism during the election periods. Here, members of diaspora could further engage with the homeland political sphere through their involvement in activities, such as being a member of an Indonesian political party in diaspora, taking part in the homeland political campaign, as well as voting for a particular candidate during the Indonesian elections. Second, non-electoral political participation,

which is related to several diasporic activities with indirect association with the homeland political sphere. This civic participation includes the overseas Indonesians' involvement in diaspora-homeland organizations, engagement in lobbying and campaigning for Indonesian political matters (e.g., the #saveKPK campaign, political lobbying for the dual-citizenship bill), and participation in diaspora's public meeting with Indonesian political actors who came to the US.

Overall, in both types of transnational political participation, I have found that media became one of the central points of reference for members of diaspora. From my informants' perspective, the increasing availability of Indonesian political news delivered by homeland media had enabled them to further engage in political participation, either electoral or non-electoral. This was followed by growing concern among members of diaspora to engage in various associations (e.g., the diaspora-homeland organization, the overseas branches of Indonesian political parties) to further exercise their interest in the homeland political-related matters. In this process, the presence of physical spaces for diaspora to articulate their political opinion, such as organizing a homeland political rally in front of the Capitol, attending a meeting with the home country's politicians at the Embassy or the Indonesian mosque, coexist with the permeation of media into members of diaspora's long-distance political activism. In this respect, I argue that the intersection between media and non-media transnational-homeland political activities further highlights the nature of mediatization of transnational politics experienced by the Indonesian diaspora in both the Washington, D. C. and the Los Angeles metropolitan areas.

## **Chapter VIII: Mediatization of Transnational-Homeland Political Participation and Its Determining Factors: Analysis, Discussion and Conclusion**

In this final chapter, I will examine how mediatization of transnational politics occurred in the case of the Indonesian diaspora's engagement in homeland political matters. I began the discussion by exemplifying the four stages of mediatization, which include extension, substitution, amalgamation and accommodation. This final part will be devoted to investigation of two primary dimensions that determine the degree of mediatization of transnational politics exhibited by members of the Indonesian diaspora. The media-related dimension will focus on the issues of structural factors (e.g., media and audience availability, access to newer media) as well as individual factors of audience motivations and characteristics (e.g., instrumental and ritual motives, age, gender, socio-economic status), the discussion of non-media dimensions will be associated more with homeland and host land conditions. The main assumption of this analysis is that, rather than seeing these dimensions as separate entities, I propose to understand them as interrelated. Thus, the combination, as well as the interaction of these factors, should be considered beneficial to further understanding the increasing complexity of the mediatization of long-distance politics. Within the analysis, I also include the consequences of mediatization of transnational politics, and further examine both the opportunities and the challenges of this practice of increasing permeation of media into diaspora's cross-border political engagement of the country of origin's political sphere. I allocate the final section of this chapter to concluding thoughts, where I summarize this study as well as provide some recommendations for future research in the

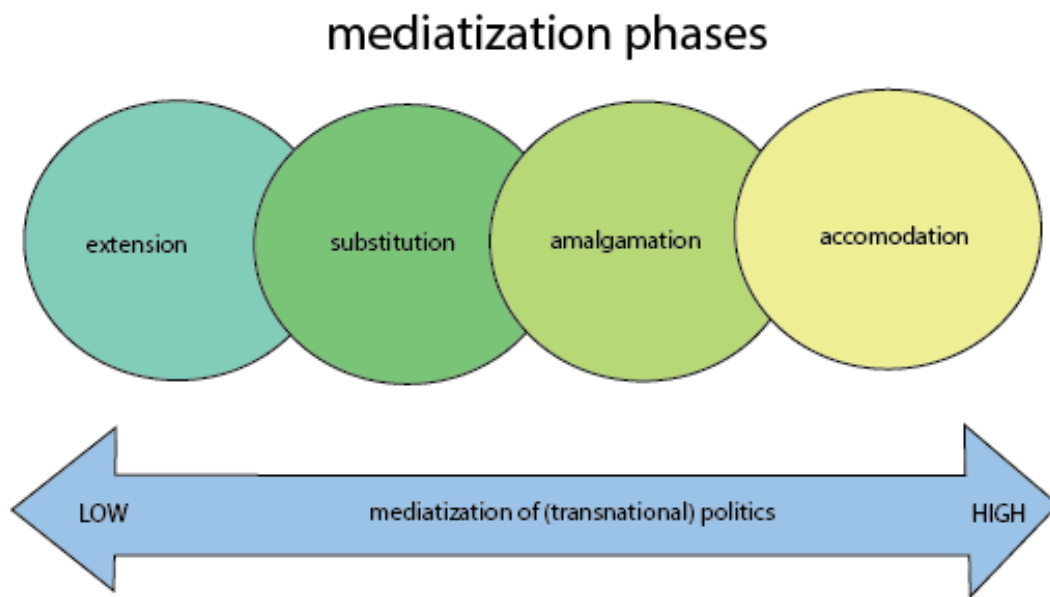
fields of media, diaspora, and transnational politics, especially in regards to the appropriation of mediatization theory.

### **Exemplifying Four Phases of Mediatization Through Diaspora Media Use**

This study opened by asking how various media were used by the Indonesian diaspora to engage in the transnational-homeland political sphere, with the main assumption that long-distance political participation by these displaced nationals was highly mediatized. The research findings support this hypothesis, especially once the practice of transnational political participation became more integrated into the practice of media use. It is true that Indonesians in the US use media in different ways, depending on their media preferences. However, the centrality of media has been prominent in how these members of diaspora maintain their involvement in the homeland political discourse.

The Indonesian diaspora in the US constantly refer to the use of media when they talk about the home country's political sphere. Being physically displaced from their homeland has contributed to how these overseas Indonesians developed a distinct mode of long-distance political participation related to the county of origin's political discourse. Not only were the processes of mediatization visible during their mediatized engagements with this transnational political activism, but members of the Indonesian diaspora also exhibited an intriguing media behavior related to their political participation, yet, how these political practices revolved around media practice, as has been suggested by mediatization theorists, needed to be exemplified in an empirical manner. Following previous investigations of the processes of mediatization of politics

(Schulz, 2004; Seethaler & Melischek, 2014; Strömbäck, 2008; Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2011), I outline how the mediatization of these people's engagement in homeland politics has materialized. While I present the model of the four phases of mediatization of politics in Figure 8. 1., a more detailed discussion of each phase is also provided in the following section.



*Figure 8. 1.* Four phases of mediatization of (transnational) politics.

**Extension phase.** For many members of the Indonesian diaspora, media were not only considered important but also had a primary function as the extension for these displaced citizens to participate in transnational-homeland politics. This justifies the premise of mediatization theory, which assumes that media function as the extension of people (Hepp, 2013), especially when media play an increasing role in enabling diaspora to extend their reach to political information, from and about the country of origin,



despite their physical distance from the homeland. Livingstone (2009) has argued that media have the ability to mediate everything, which was evident when the home country's political information was obtained by diaspora through media, and not by non-media experience. Strömbäck and Esser (2014) further asserted that within this phase media became, "a necessary prerequisite for further processes of the mediatization of politics" (p. 377). In this sense, media should also be considered the preexisting condition for transnational political engagement. Through media, these displaced citizens obtained relevant political information, which they needed to further engage in the home country's political discussion. This practice was very prominent during the election periods, when most of my informants reported that they regularly acquired news about the Indonesian elections from homeland media.

Media have helped most diaspora to overcome the physical-geographical obstacles, enabling their long-distance political participation. Therefore, the increasing availability of political content from the country of origin offered by media also contributed to the extension of possibility of diaspora's political engagement with the Indonesian political sphere. Additionally, Shohib, an informant in Washington, D. C., explained the role of media use for diaspora in transnational political-news seeking as:

Offering fewer boundaries and providing a real-time connection, so we felt like we do not live outside the home country. It feels like we are living in the same country but in different areas and we have never met. Nevertheless, in the context of news speed and update, there is no difference at all. (personal communication, March 12, 2015)

Following this line of argument, the Indonesian diaspora did not need to be in the homeland in order to obtain news about Indonesian politics since media had provided them with a real-time connection with the home country's political information. This was not available in the past, especially before advanced media technologies, such as the Internet, social media and smart phones, were widely accessible for a minority group like the Indonesian diaspora in the US.

The use of media as a mode of political information seeking, I argue, should be seen as challenging the dichotomous assumption of the active/passive audience especially, as I learned, members of diaspora intentionally did not exhibit the role of active media users all the time when they consumed political news from the country of origin. To some extent, accessing media content from the home country, political news in particular, tended to be more ritual in nature rather than instrumental, and thus, demonstrated a more passive media behavior of these diasporic audiences. I assume that this issue might also imply a difference in the level of engagement of people in diaspora with transnational politics, that active-seeking media users would perform a higher degree of participation compared to 'passive' media users. The Indonesian diaspora who expressed high interest in politics were more likely to purposely seek politics-related news and later share it with less active audiences. In this sense, the political content would be circulated to the members of diaspora anyway, regardless of their level of media engagement.

**Substitution phase.** During my observation, I found that because it was less possible to physically participate with the homeland politics, the Indonesian diaspora

turned to media as a substitute their engagement with the political sphere of the country of origin. For instance, during the 2014 Indonesian national election, most members of the Indonesian diaspora could not attend the physical political campaign rallies held by political parties in the home country. Therefore, they substituted media experience for their physical presence. Through media, they could still experience their homeland political campaigns but in a mediatized condition. This practice was evident in the case of the Indonesian diaspora involvement in online political engagement, such as campaigning for several issues like #SaveKPK, signing online petitions to support Overseas Voting Bloc for Indonesian diaspora, and online crowd-funding for the dual-citizenship project initiated by the IDN. Since not all members of diaspora could spend their time attending the politics-related meetings organized by diaspora associations, they could still support those activities through online political practices. This was also possible due to the increasing availability of online accesses and streaming services of their homeland media in the country of settlement, thus further encouraging the engagement of mediated experiences of diaspora's political participation. In this way, the reliance of members of the Indonesian diaspora upon media as a substitute for a real-life political experience became more prominent, especially if they considered that participating with political matters via media was more convenient compared to attending mass campaigns or demonstrations.

**Amalgamation phase.** Mediatization of transnational-homeland politics further materialized when various types of diasporic political activism were amalgamated with media practices. During the fieldwork, I found that the mixture of media-related political

activism and non-media political practice was visible in the case of the Indonesian diaspora's engagement in homeland politics. When dozens of Indonesian diaspora in Washington, D. C. initiated a march in front of the Capitol to support Jokowi as the presidential candidate during the 2014 election, media covered the event and shared it to the audience, both in diaspora and the homeland. Moreover, the video footage of the campaign, recorded through smart phones, was widely circulated through social media by members of the Indonesian diaspora who supported the very same political figure. Here I argue that this was mainly evidence of mediatization of politics, when non-media political participation (e.g., demonstration, physical political campaign) fused with a mediated political engagement.

Moreover, since, "media use is woven into the fabric of everyday life" (Schulz, 2004, p. 89), it is becoming more difficult to separate media practice from political practice as exhibited by members of the Indonesian diaspora. From what I observed during my fieldwork, it was common for the Indonesian diaspora to discuss contemporary political issues in Indonesia while they watching Indonesian television news through their TV sets at home. As mentioned in a previous chapter, another significant example of the amalgamation phase happened when some Indonesian diaspora in Washington, D. C., supporters of Jokowi, organized a *nonton bareng* (collective viewing) of the live broadcast of the inauguration of Jokowi as the newly elected Indonesian president in October, 2014. Here, the practice of media consumption merged with the practice of political talks. Just like a group of American football fans watching the Super Bowl game on TV (media activity) at a local bar while drinking, eating, and

talking with their fellow supporters (non-media activities), the media-related political activity became amalgamated with the conversations between the diaspora about the political event they were currently watching. I further argue that to some extent, transnational political practices demonstrated by members of the Indonesian diaspora revolved around media practices, especially when the practice of media consumption turned into a distinct mode of the Indonesian diaspora's engagement with the home country's political discourse. As a consequence, the boundaries between media and non-media practices were diminished (Schulz, 2004), although they were not entirely absent.

**Accommodation phase.** Another level of mediatization can be found when the media logic has been diffused into the political sphere. While political actors have adapted to how the media work (Hepp, 2013), the Indonesian diaspora as transnational audiences of their homeland political news have also become more accustomed to how the media represent political events in Indonesia. What gets intensively reported by the homeland media would probably be considered important by people in diaspora. During my fieldwork, I observed that when Indonesian news portals had frequent coverage of political news about the conspiracy against the KPK, many in the Indonesian diaspora became more aware of this political tension. As mentioned previously, some of them later organized a demonstration to support the KPK, following the same trend that occurred in Indonesia. In this sense, I argue that members of diaspora accommodated the media's representation of the current political condition in Indonesia; and thus, performed political activism according to media logic. As a result, the Indonesian diaspora's transnational political engagement should be regarded as highly mediatized.

Moreover, this phase of mediatization is also considered the highest level of mediatization of politics (Schulz, 2004; Strömbäck & Esser, 2014). Since many members of diaspora reported they felt an increasing importance of media enabling their long-distance political participation, they also admitted they took it granted. They thought it was only natural that the Indonesian political sphere was also present in diaspora, available through media. Yet, I argue that they might never have realized that they rarely experienced real-life Indonesian political processes other than what was offered by media. For most of the time, people in diaspora either forgot or were unaware when they used media to involve themselves in the Indonesian political sphere, they also accommodated media logic. Here I argue further that the way they thought about, or even participated in, Indonesian politics was more constructed by how the media operated and represented the home country's politics. The actual political condition may not always resonate with what had been shown in the media.

Nevertheless, since people in diaspora appropriated various media for transnational political participation in different ways, we need to be aware that they would have experienced the degree of mediatization of politics differently. Therefore, I suggest it is also important to understand what the factors were that differentiated the level of mediatization demonstrated by members of diaspora when they engaged in the home country's political matters, rather than simplify and even generalize their diverse mediatization experiences. I discuss these influencing factors in the following section.

## **Factors Determining the Degree of Mediatization of Transnational Political Participation**

While the previous section illustrated how the phases of mediatization of politics were exhibited by members of the Indonesian diaspora's engagement in the homeland political discourse, this section is devoted to conversation regarding factors that should be included in an analysis of the degree of mediatization of transnational politics. Since not all Indonesians in diaspora demonstrate the same level of engagement, where I found they tended to perform unbalanced involvement in the transnational-homeland politics, it became important to examine what were the most influential elements that contributed to such variation. First, I will analyze some factors within media-related dimensions that might affect the degree of mediatization of long-distance politics. This will include discussion of: (a) media structural factors, such as access to media, audience availability and presence of the newer media (e.g., online and social media); and (b) individual factors, which cover the issues of audience motivation and individual characteristics. How non-media dimensions, in particular home country and host country conditions, became important factors that influence the process of mediatization of transnational politics of the Indonesian diaspora will be examined. As illustrated in Figure 8. 2., an important issue that also needs to be mentioned in this section is how all of these factors, both media and non-media, can be connected, intertwined, sometimes overlapped, and even contradict each other. This will offer a better understanding of the complexity of mediatization of long-distance politics experienced by members of the Indonesian diaspora.

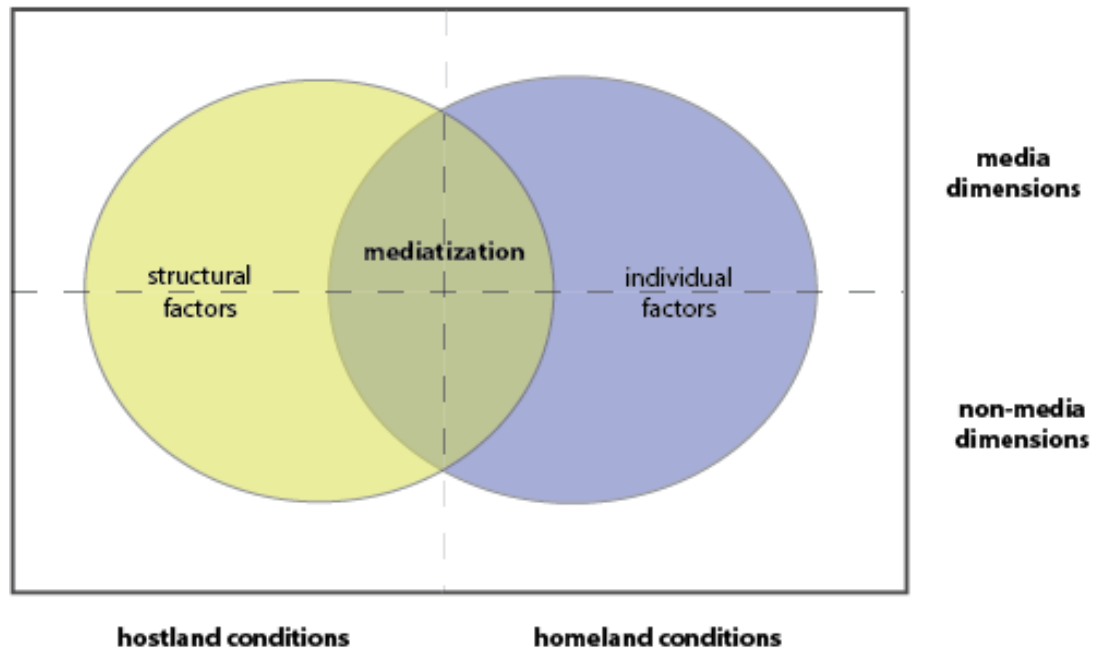


Figure 8. 2. Mediatization of transnational politics and its determining factors.

**Media-related dimensions.** In today's media-saturated society, the Indonesian diaspora can enjoy relatively easy access to the home country's political news through media, which is one of the prerequisites of the mediatization of transnational politics. I argue that increasing availability of various media platforms, especially access to homeland political content, has contributed to the flexibility of members of diaspora to appropriate media for their political needs. Even though I found, in terms of media preference, the Indonesian diaspora relied more on online and social media for transnational-homeland political participation, the use of media for this kind of political engagement also varied. Therefore, media's influence on the diaspora's political engagement should not be reduced to a singular process. I believe that media could both



further encourage and discourage the Indonesian diaspora's transnational political participation, depending on at least two factors: structural and individual factors.

***Structural factors.*** Structural factors refer to issues of audience availability, access to media and the availability of newer media (Cooper & Tang, 2009; Webster, 2009; Webster & Wakshlag, 1983). To some extent, I found that these factors limited the degree of mediatization of the Indonesian diaspora with homeland politics. For instance, since many of my informants worked more than one job, they said that they did not have the flexibility of watching Indonesian television news to access political content. Many of them reported that they could only watch broadcast content once they were home from work, which was usually very late at night. Indonesian political news on television may always be available, but diaspora may not always be available to watch it. As a result, I further argue that no matter how many television channels the Indonesian diaspora own, watching homeland political content would become less important if they were not available to watch those channels.

In terms of access, various scholars argued that having more access to media would affect the level of audience exposure to those media (Cooper & Tang, 2009; Webster, Phalen & Lichty, 2006). Since Indonesian television channels were not available via US broadcast/cable service, people in diaspora are required to connect their television to decoder devices to access Indonesian broadcast content. As discussed earlier, subscribers of *Nusan TV*, a streaming service offered by the Indonesian diaspora, had to spend at least \$240 in annual subscription fees for high quality access to the homeland television channels. Bucek, an informant in Los Angeles, was willing to pay

such a fee and so had regular access to Indonesian broadcast content, especially political news. To the contrary, I found that other members of the Indonesian diaspora without constant access to the televised political content, were limited in their engagement with more updated political news. Fortunately, the Indonesian diaspora who refused (or could not afford) to pay for this kind of service, could switch to a newer media platform like the Internet to access the very same content but with a lower quality. This prevented them from being disconnected from the latest news of the home country's political sphere.

The availability of online media could also further foster the diaspora engagement with the homeland political content. Since Indonesian political content might not always be available on traditional platforms in the host country, I found that many Indonesian diaspora needed to rely on the Internet to access homeland political content. I also argue that this was a reasonable choice not only because online media were more available but also because accessing the Internet was more convenient compared to spending time watching television or reading the newspaper. Moreover, during my fieldwork, I discovered that the majority of the Indonesian diaspora owned the most updated smart phones, by which they had constant access to various content from the home country, including political news. Through mobile phones, I assume there would be no (space or time) limit to the Indonesian diaspora's access to political information in the country of origin, except when their phones were turned off. In an extreme example, a diaspora member admitted that she never turned her mobile phone off, even when she went to sleep. While she slept her social media notifications, some related to homeland political

messages, silently popped up on her mobile phone screen, waiting to be read when she woke up.

Previously, Cooper and Tang (2009) offered the concept of ‘active within structure’ where they argued that we should ignore the passive/active dichotomy, yet, we still need to be aware that there will always be influence of structure on media choice.

They further explained:

Media structures will continue to change in form—individual can watch television on their phones on the way to work, at work on the Internet, or time-shift content at home—but structures of availability and access will always continue to exist within the fixed limits of time, income, and patterns of daily activity.” (p. 415)

Following this line of argument, it is true that Indonesian diaspora’s access to homeland political content might be limited by these structures. Nevertheless, “individuals may even seek structure as a way to deal with the vast multitude of content and media options available” (Cooper & Tang, 2009, p. 415). Therefore, to overcome such barriers Indonesian diasporans developed their own distinct ‘structure’ of media choice, such as accessing homeland media content through smart phones and online streaming services at their most convenient time (where they do not really have to worry about the limits of time, income, and pattern of daily activity) and consuming homeland political news posted by their friends on social media without having the need to actively seeking those content. Here, I argue that in the case of their engagement with home country’s political content, these members of Indonesian diaspora also exhibited the practice of ‘active within structure.’

**Individual factors.** Cooper and Tang (2009) separated individual factors that determine the level of audience exposure to media into two categories: audience motivations and individual characteristics. In terms of audience motivation, I argue that the Indonesian diaspora's use of media to access Indonesian political content can be considered both instrumental and ritual. On one hand, politically active diaspora tended to play an active-seeking role in political content consumption, indicating a high degree of instrumental aspect of mediatization of politics. For instance, Joe, a politically active member of diaspora, tended to exhibit a more instrumental use of media, mainly to engage in the latest Indonesian political updates. He explained that most of the time he intentionally sought political information, either by streaming homeland television channels or Indonesian online news portals, and later reposted and shared what political news he considered important for his fellow nationals, both in diaspora and the homeland. On the other hand, I argue that using homeland media to obtain Indonesian political content can also be placed in a ritual context, especially when diaspora develop a regular pattern of media consumption. Moreover, when the practice of consuming the home country's political news became a more habitual practice, a higher degree of ritualistic mediatization materialized.

While previously Georgiou (2006) argued that, "diasporic media are extensively consumed, though not necessarily by choice" (p. 92), I found that this was also the case with the Indonesian diaspora's exposure to their homeland political news. Many members of the Indonesian diaspora revealed that their consumption of Indonesian political content was not always intentional. For example, the Indonesian diaspora mentioned that when

they accessed social media like Facebook and Twitter they were likely to be exposed to homeland political news posted by their friends rather than actively seeking such information. Some members of diaspora I spoke with claimed that it was not as though they necessarily wanted to read the political news but those posts would be there on their social media timeline anyway. In this sense, they argued it would be more difficult to disengage from Indonesian political content than ever.

While scholars have argued that individual characteristics, such as gender, age, and socio-economic status influence understanding audience exposure to media content (Albarran & Umphrey, 1993; Cooper & Tang, 2009; Kang, 2002), I found that, with the exception of socio-economic status, these factors had less impact in the case of the Indonesian diaspora engagement with Indonesian political news. During the fieldwork, I observed that both genders had an equal opportunity to engage with political content as well as participating in the political sphere. Similarly, the younger people exhibited almost the same level of passion as the elder diaspora did in their involvement in the home country's politics. Nonetheless, this was the case only with the first generation diaspora and excluding observation of the second generation of diaspora. Some scholars have suggested that their association with their ancestor's homeland is more limited (Dhariwal & Connolly, 2013; Rinnawi, 2012).

Meanwhile, the level of mediatization was found to be even more limited with the Indonesian diaspora with a lower socio-economic status. As argued by Irwan, an informant in Washington, D. C., "Indonesian politics is important, but my main reason to immigrate to the US is to make a better living; thus, I do not want to spend most of my

time in discussing Indonesian politics” (personal communication, March 9, 2015). Some informants I met in Los Angeles expressed a similar concern. They claimed it was difficult for the Indonesian diaspora to be fully engaged in the country of origin’s politics at the expense of their time to make a living. Nevertheless, many people were still willing to spend their leisure time consuming Indonesian political news, and even attended some transnational-homeland politics-related activities in diaspora.

**Non-media dimensions.** Some mediatization scholars argue that it is essential to include the non-media dimensions in the exploration of the mediatization processes (Hepp, 2010; Jansson, 2013). Hepp (2010) called this approach a ‘non-media centric examination of mediatization.’ Moreover, while media-related factors were found to be important to the processes of transnational political engagement of the Indonesian diaspora with the home country’s politics, I argue that several factors outside the media context should be included within the analysis. Following Østergaard-Nielsen’s (2003b) study, this current research also found that at least two non-media factors contributed to the level of mediatization of transnational politics: homeland-related conditions and the host country’s conditions. Here I suggest that the two factors should be considered as interconnected as well as influencing each other, in terms of enabling diaspora’s engagement with homeland politics.

***The homeland-related conditions.*** The homeland-related conditions refer to two main elements: structural and individual. Structural elements are more associated with factors like political developments in the homeland. This factor resonates with the notion that when the country of origin is experiencing (political) turbulence, this situation is

more likely to attract more people in diaspora to greater concern about what is happening in the homeland (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b). Similarly, I found that many members of the Indonesian diaspora exhibited a higher degree of political participation when their homeland was undergoing political uncertainty, or at least during crucial political moments, such as the national elections. Many of the informants said their transnational political participation was also stimulated by their sense of nationalism as Indonesian nationals. As argued by Andre, a research participant in Maryland, “No matter what, we are still Indonesian nationals. We still have families and friends back in Indonesia. If something bad happened to our country, such as a chaos, we would be worried.” Eventually, this would motivate these members of the Indonesian diaspora to participate in the homeland electoral processes, at least through the mediatized practice of political news consumption.

During the 2014 Indonesian presidential election, for example, many Indonesian diaspora thought they should be involved in this crucial political event since it might influence the democratization process in Indonesia. Debbie, an Indonesian diasporan in Washington, D. C., said this current election would determine the course of the democratization process in Indonesia. She explained that if Prabowo Subianto, a presidential candidate accused of being involved in human rights violations in Indonesia, won the election, she was worried that the country would be turned into an authoritarian state. She further argued, “Since the stakes were high... each ballot is important. I even recommend all of my family members in Indonesia to use their rights to vote.” As a nationalist, she considered it her moral duty to actively participate in this homeland

political process, by closely monitoring homeland political development during the election through media and even by organizing political campaigns to support one political candidate. Following her line of argument, during this particular moment, the level to which members of diaspora depended upon media for the most updated and relevant political information would increase since it was important for these transnational people to be better informed before they could participate further in the homeland political processes.

Unfortunately, the trend has declined post-election, since diaspora's interest in homeland politics has also decreased. As Irwan argued, following Indonesian politics on a daily basis can be exhausting and time consuming. Therefore, he gradually reduced access to news about Indonesian politics after Jokowi was elected as the new president. Meanwhile, Hari said that one reason he distanced himself from Indonesian political news in the post-election season was that he did not really believe that Indonesia would become a better country even though Jokowi, a promising candidate during the 2014 election, was elected. Overall, many Indonesians in diaspora thought that what happened after the election period was less important, or at least less crucial to the political development in the home country. Therefore, I learned that their attention to the homeland political news was waning after the election.

Another structural element like the home country's political intervention, or 'transnationalism from above,' was found to influence the mediatization of transnational-homeland politics among Indonesian diaspora, both in Washington, D. C. and in Los Angeles. In the past, many members of the Indonesian diaspora reported that the



homeland government representatives, such as diplomats in the Embassy and Consulate General tended to keep their distance from the Indonesians in diaspora. They further explained that homeland-related activities sponsored by the government representatives were mainly limited to consular services and cultural promotions. Only recently had the homeland government tried to reach out to the Indonesian diaspora communities, allowing diaspora's political voices to be heard. When Ambassador Dino Patti Djalal inaugurated the Indonesian Diaspora Network (IDN) in Los Angeles back in 2012, the moment was considered by many Indonesian diaspora as one important step toward institutionalized transnational political communication between the homeland government and Indonesians in diaspora. Ever since, as mentioned in the previous chapters, both the Embassy and the Consulate General regularly sponsored politics-related (along with social and cultural-related) discussions that involved the Indonesian diaspora. Moreover, the home country's government also invited more active participation of the members of diaspora to organize several important political events, in particular the Indonesian national elections in diaspora. I argue that it could be expected that through these kinds of homeland government interventions in political matters, long-distance participation by the Indonesian diaspora in the home country's politics, mediatized or non-mediatized, could further increase.

Meanwhile, individual elements, such as personal experience and personal (preexisting) attitude towards politics, were also found to be influential in diaspora's decision to become involved in the mediatized home country's political discourse. I argue that these elements contribute to the differences in the level of mediatization of politics,

in particular in their engagement in the transnational-homeland politics through the practice of media use. In general, the Indonesian diaspora tended to preserve previous political attitudes and behaviors when they moved to the country of settlement (Missbach, 2012). For instance, some ethnic-Chinese Indonesians who I met in Los Angeles tended to be distanced from the homeland politics, and preferred to be involved in promoting Indonesian culture and economy; they also revealed that they had not been interested in politics even when they were in Indonesia. To the contrary, many Indonesians in Washington, D. C. who had previously been interested in politics when they were in Indonesia, reported that they tried to preserve their interest by following the homeland political updates.

This was evident among those who were students cum political activists prior to living in the diaspora. Bona, a former activist in 1998, claimed that his interest in contributing to Indonesian politics was one of his reasons for joining the PPLN, in addition to his regular consumption of Indonesian political news. Similarly, Debbie and Emil, both student activists from the University of Indonesia, were involved in the formation of the US Chapter of ILUNI (*Ikatan Alumni Universitas Indonesia*, the Association for Alumni of the University of Indonesia). Through ILUNI, they arranged various discussions that promoted political awareness of the Indonesian diaspora. Former student/political activists like Debbie and Emil demonstrated a higher proclivity to engage in long-distance politics, even though they have been living outside their homeland for a long period of time. Debbie recalled her experience as a student cum political activist in 1998 in forcing the country's authoritarian leader, President Suharto,

to step down from his position (which he had held for 35 years). That experience had motivated her to maintain her interest and concern in Indonesian politics. Personal engagement in Indonesian politics had encouraged some members of the Indonesian diaspora like Debbie to further exercise their political voices in diaspora, through both mediatized and non-mediatized transnational-homeland political participations.

In contrast, Shohib, also a student activist before coming to the US, said that his interest in Indonesian politics has been declining after the 2014 presidential election. He had so much hope for President Jokowi as the newly elected president, but was later disappointed with Jokowi's performance in dealing with several political matters. This led Shohib to decide to decrease his engagement with the homeland media to access current political information about Indonesia. Yet, he was unsure whether he would be able to escape exposure to Indonesian political news when he accessed online and social media.

*The host country's conditions.* During my fieldwork, host country conditions were found to be influential on the level of mediatization of the Indonesian diaspora with homeland politics. According to Østergaard-Nielsen (2003b), these conditions include: the mode of migration, the length of stay in the host country, structural conditions at the host country and the opportunity to engage in the country of settlement's politics. The Indonesian diaspora came to the US through various modes of migration, some as economic migrants, others seeking political asylum, which would also influence the degree of their mediatization of transnational political engagement. As argued by some of my informants, the Indonesian diaspora who came to the US as refugees, for instance,

tended to care less about political conditions in the country of origin since they may have bad experiences related to domestic politics in Indonesia. Meanwhile, since economic migrants did not always have negative experiences with Indonesian politics, they reported that they did not have significant barriers to engaging in the homeland political sphere. Economic migrants, as a result, were more likely to consume political news of the homeland compared to those former political asylum seekers.

Østergaard-Nielsen (2003b) also suggested that the length of stay should be regarded as important in determining the level of engagement with homeland politics. While she argued the newcomer diaspora tended to be more politically active compared to the latecomers, this was not the case of the Indonesian diaspora. I found that both categories—newcomer and those who have been in the US for many years—to be equally engaged in Indonesian political discussions. It is true that the newcomers may still have a fresh memory of the non-mediated experience of being physically involved in the Indonesian political sphere while those who arrived in the country of settlement much earlier relied more on media and felt a stronger nostalgia for the homeland's political situations. However, during my fieldwork, I met people from both groups who exercised with very much the same degree of mediatization of transnational political participation. This is why I think it is important to consider how media have empowered members of the Indonesian diaspora, regardless of their length of stay in the host country, to have a more equal opportunity to engage in the transnational-homeland political sphere.

Despite the wider opportunity offered by mediatization of transnational politics, the Indonesian diaspora who held privileged positions in the host society still exhibited a

great tendency to participate in long-distance political activism. As mentioned earlier, people who came from a higher socio-economic status were more likely to perform a higher level of both media and political engagement. In contrast, members of diaspora who were at a lower socio-economic level tended to respond minimally in terms of their regular political participation with the home country's politics. In this sense, I suggest that the lower structural position of the diaspora in the country of settlement, the lesser their transnational political engagement, especially when the diaspora's position in the host society was marginal. This was in contrast to Anderson's (1998) assumption when he argued that diaspora who experienced marginalization within the host country's society are more likely to engage in long-distance political activism through media. I found that many Indonesian diaspora, rather than enjoying the privilege of transnational political activism, spent most of their time making a living, which limited their ability to both consume the homeland political news and to further participate with Indonesian politics.

This situation supports the assumptions of some of my informants who regarded transnational political engagement as being dominated by the privileged members of the Indonesian diaspora, where not all people had an equal opportunity to participate in the homeland's politics. Additionally, people who have had an opportunity to participate in the host country's politics were more willing to disregard their home country's political matters (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b), such as Indonesians who changed their citizenships and later became involved in US politics. This might further reduce the degree of transnational-homeland political participation of Indonesians in diaspora. Fortunately,

due to the availability of various media platforms to access political content from the country of origin, the Indonesian diaspora have a wider opportunity to participate in a mediatized political sphere of the homeland, disregarding their structural position in the country of settlement. Moreover, throughout the fieldwork in both metropolises, I frequently encountered members of diaspora who already obtained American citizenship and who still showed a high degree of interest in Indonesian political news despite the fact they could no longer vote in the Indonesian elections.

Another issue related to the structural factor, was as the distance of the country of settlement from the country of origin, and how this could contribute to the willingness of people in diaspora to engage in the homeland politics. For instance, while Mexicans in the US were found to be actively involved in the political matters of their home country, this was helped by the close proximity of Mexico and the US (Hickerson, 2013). Therefore, these displaced people could return to their home country during elections, and homeland politicians could come to the US political campaigning in diaspora communities. Such travel was unlikely for the Indonesian diaspora. I believe that few of the Indonesian diaspora are willing to take a 20-hour flight, at the cost of around \$1,000 for a one-way ticket, just to be physically involved in political matters in Indonesia. Hickerson (2013) believed that money should be regarded as an important issue in most transnational activities, and in my own argument, this should also affect the degree of transnational-homeland political engagement demonstrated by the Indonesian diaspora. Consequently, relying on media as a way to engage in Indonesian politics was considered

the most logical and economical, for most of the Indonesian diaspora, both in the Washington, D. C. and in the Los Angeles metropolitan areas.

For some of my informants, the availability of diaspora media was considered beneficial for them as a way to engage in homeland politics. However, unlike the Mexican diaspora with abundant options of Spanish-language media in the US (Hickerson, 2013; Moreno, 2009), few diaspora media were available to Indonesians in this country. It is true that the Indonesian diaspora media like *Kabari* and *Indonesia Media* provided Indonesian politics-related news, but their numbers were considerably lower. Moreover, distribution of these print publications was also limited, regardless the availability of their online platforms. For these reasons, many members of the Indonesian diaspora who I met said they had to access the home country's media if they wanted the latest political information from Indonesia. Fortunately, many of the homeland news media channels were relatively accessible in diaspora, especially through the popular use of online and social media as well as smart phones.

Homeland media consumption has been increasingly acknowledged by various scholars to be a prominent communicative practice among various members of diaspora (Kama & Malka, 2013; Mainsah, 2009; Ogunyemi, 2012), not just Indonesians. In many other countries, homeland media are preferred for various reasons, mainly because the host country's mainstream media tend to underrepresent and misrepresent the immigrants (Bailey, 2007; Ogan, 2001). It is true that Indonesians in diaspora could spend hours watching American television channels, especially TV series and movies. Nevertheless, since the Indonesian diaspora rarely found the most updated news about their country of

origin's political matters, they switched their attention to political news provided by the homeland media instead.

### **Problematizing Mediatization of Transnational-Homeland Politics**

Previous studies on mediatization of politics rarely offered criticism of this practice of increasing influence of and dependency upon media for political engagement. For example, even though Strömbäck and Esser (2014) were successful in providing empirical evidence of the four dimensions of mediatization of politics, they did not even mention the shortcomings of these processes. Moreover, I believe that in the case of mediatization of transnational political involvement, as in the case of the Indonesian diaspora's mediatized participation in their home country's politics, the experience of mediatization should not be seen merely as more complex but also as bringing along some problems. Below I will discuss some of the issues regarding the problem of mediatization of transnational-homeland politics encountered by members of the Indonesian diaspora in the US, by focusing on two major problems: following the (homeland) media logic; and the status of diaspora as a transnational audience of the homeland political news.

**The problems with following (homeland) media logic.** From my conversations with members of diaspora, I learned that their regular engagement in a mediatized political sphere of the country of origin indicated empowerment for these displaced nationals to retain their connection with the political reality situated in the home country. As this would lead to increasing dependency of members of diaspora upon media logic, which highlights a strong form of mediatization (Ampuja et al., 2014), it is important to



discuss why this matter would also be problematic for the mediatization of transnational-homeland politics demonstrated by the Indonesian diaspora.

Following Strömbäck and Esser's (2014) discussion of factors that constitute media logic, the main attention of this section will be given particularly to three dimensions: professionalism, commercialism, and media technology. As I further argue, these three aspects reflect the nature of how the homeland media operate, and in turn, it influences the mediatization of politics experienced by members of diaspora as a transnational audience of home country political news. Therefore, they deserve some critical attention.

In terms of the level of professionalism, many of the Indonesian diaspora argued that they had become aware of problems related to the (lack of) professionalism exercised by Indonesian media workers when they produced and published political news stories. Ideally, journalists are required to demonstrate some degree of independence and autonomy, from political and other external influences (Esser, 2013; Hallin & Mancini, 2004), as well as be able to define newsworthiness based only on journalism standards (O'Neill & Harcup, 2009; Strömbäck & Esser, 2014). Yet, this was not what happened with many Indonesian news organizations. I frequently met with members of the Indonesian diaspora who reported they encountered a lack of professionalism exhibited by Indonesian media when these displaced audiences read or watched homeland political news.

One of the most extreme examples was shared by Benny, an Indonesian who works for the Consulate Office in Los Angeles. During the national election in 2014, an

Indonesian journalist from a major television news channel came to cover how the Indonesian diaspora in Los Angeles conducted and involved themselves in the election processes. On voting day, PPLN members who organized the election had to hold a meeting with witnesses from political parties representatives as they had encountered an issue regarding miscalculation of the number of ballots, resulting in tension among the attendees. Intervening during the meeting, the journalist suddenly began shouting out provocative words, ratcheting up the already high tension. Shortly afterwards, Benny saw the journalist secretly bring up a video camera from her bag and quietly record the conflict, before someone yelled at her to stop taking the video of the meeting. “It felt like she had been waiting for the chaos to happen,” Benny hypothesized. He further explained that he was surprised that a journalist from a respectable Indonesian media would exhibit such unethical behavior in reporting news about the election.

Nevertheless, for some other members of the Indonesian diaspora, Indonesian media’s professionalism was less important. Being aware how difficult it was to find any homeland media that could offer a high level of professionalism, they postponed their complaint about this matter. For these members of diaspora, understanding that many Indonesian media were still regarded as unprofessional, they did not really expect more than they got.

Another important issue noticed by members of diaspora was the Indonesian media’s partisanship. Under President Suharto’s dictatorship, most Indonesian media were under government control and state censorship of political news was routine (Kitley, 2000; Sen & Hill, 2006). Following the collapse of Suharto’s regime, political

editorship had been abolished. As a result, Indonesian media tended to be more liberal in reporting political news, yet, the issue of media bias escalated mainly because many of the media are owned by politicians or those who still held power in the government (e.g., ministries, parliamentary members) (Armando, 2014; Ida, 2010). In the Indonesian presidential election, two major television news channels, *Metro TV* and *TV One*, were considered by most of my informants to be partisans since the first one is owned by Surya Paloh—a media tycoon, former elite member of Suharto’s party of Golkar, and now acting as the head of Partai Nasdem (*Partai Nasional Demokrat*, the National Democrat Party), and the second one is affiliated with Abu Rizal Bakrie (the current head of Golkar). *Metro TV* was seen as supporting Jokowi since Paloh’s political party had signed a coalition agreement with Jokowi’s party of PDIP. To the contrary, *TV One* was reckoned as a supporter of Prabowo due to Golkar’s affiliation with this presidential candidate during the 2014 election.

Understanding the close relationship between these media and their specific political actors in the homeland, people in diaspora felt that the practice of consuming transnational-homeland political news became problematic. On one hand, they could not easily trust the reporting by homeland media of political matters since there was a higher chance that each media organization would support its own political voice in framing the issues. Some members of the Indonesian diaspora I met during the fieldwork revealed that they did not trust Indonesian media at all, especially in reporting national politics. On the other hand, members of diaspora did not have many other options and had relied solely on homeland media for current Indonesian political news. Nevertheless, many

Indonesian diaspora tended to be permissive on this issue. Hakim, an informant in Los Angeles, for example, argued, “There was too much media bias, but I think it was justifiable for each media organization to have its own perspective, especially in today’s cyber era where all various versions (of political news) should also be available.” Apparently, this issue did not prevent members of diaspora to further experience mediatization of the transnational-homeland political sphere since the problem of media professionalism was considered by some Indonesians in diaspora to be acceptable. Even for the most cynical toward Indonesian media, I argue they might never be able to fully resist the temptation of, or even the dependency upon, homeland political news transmitted by various home country media organizations.

Moreover, commercialism, which reflects how private media work has been driven by market logic and seeks maximum profit (Hamilton, 2004; Strömbäck & Esser, 2014), highlights the practice of mediatization of the politics of transnational Indonesians in the US. I argue that when homeland media as the primary source of long-distance political engagement became more concerned with making a profit, they tended to ignore their role in serving the public interest by providing relevant and important information related to the political processes. As noted by some members of diaspora, many homeland mainstream media offered sensational news report on politics, focusing more on personal issues, gossip, and peripheral matters. This happened because these media aimed to reach as wide an audience as possible. For example, some Indonesian diasporans in Los Angeles mentioned that when one media organization (affiliated with Prabowo’s supporters) reported on a political scandal to attack Jokowi, they doubted it

was based solely on the differences of their political interests, but rather was supported by commercial logic. They further assumed, by ‘adding fuel to the fire’ was meant to garner more attention than the Indonesian public would otherwise have given to such reports. For this reason, the case of mediatization of transnational politics experienced by the Indonesian diaspora further reinforces Landerer’s (2013) argument that media logic resonates with commercial logic.

In the course of this study, I found that both ‘lack of professionalism’ and ‘commercial logic’ demonstrated by homeland media covering Indonesian political news, have been amplified by the inability of these media organizations to appropriate the advancement of media technology. It is true that with the increasing availability of advanced technology, many Indonesian media have become more accessible to people in diaspora, through online streaming and news apps. Yet, as members of diaspora recalled, most home country media emphasized immediacy more than accuracy when they published reports about various political events in Indonesia. From the audience’s perspective, in order to obtain the most updated news as fast as possible, many members of diaspora also tended to disregard accuracy and even shared what could be questionable information with their peers in diaspora, mainly through social media. This happened because Indonesians in diaspora were commonly uncritical of the credibility of homeland media, and just consumed Indonesian political news with no inclination to cross check its trustworthiness.

During my fieldwork, I encountered members of diaspora who reported their preference for reading political news from blogs and other non-mainstream online media,

mainly because they did not really trust the existing Indonesian popular media. For example, one Indonesian Muslim diasporan in California said he frequently obtained Indonesian political news from *PKS Piyungan*, a news blog which some people assumed to be affiliated with the Indonesian Islamic political party PKS. Since most Indonesian mainstream media like *Kompas*, *Tempo*, and *Metro TV* were leaning toward one particular candidate during the presidential race, he thought he might find more reliable news on this blog instead. However, what he considered more reliable news sources, such as *PKS Piyungan* and *Islam Pos*, were seen by other members of the Indonesian diaspora as the most untrustworthy. Overseas Indonesians who did not trust these smaller non-mainstream news sources argued that the increasing availability of digital technology had further encouraged irresponsible people to develop and to run unprofessional news blogs, which shared and circulated irresponsible news and information. They thought these informal news media should be limited, or at least regulated, by the government, since many of them were being accused of spreading provocative and even false information, especially during political campaigns. Joe, one of my informants who supported Jokowi, assumed that the circulation of false information during the 2014 presidential election—saying that Jokowi, a Muslim and Javanese president candidate was actually a Chinese non-Muslim and even a communist—was amplified by these non-formal news sources which further circulated this information through social media pages by many people in diaspora. In the end, I argue that media technology was critical in the process of mediatization of politics, especially when considering its role in the way news was not

only produced and presented (Hjarvard, 2013; Strömbäck & Esser, 2014), but also how it was consumed, circulated and shared by the members of diaspora.

**Diaspora as displaced transnational audience (of homeland politics).**

Mediatization scholars argue that not only are media increasingly important as the primary source of information but also as one of the pre-existing conditions of political participation in today's media saturated society (Shehata & Strömbäck, 2014; Strömbäck & Esser, 2014). Based on my informants' stories, in the past, people in diaspora relied more on personal communication and personal experience related to the homeland politics, mainly due to the absence of modern media technology. At that time, it was common for members of the Indonesian diaspora just returned from the homeland to share their experiences about conditions in the country of origin, including the political developments. Nowadays, they can easily obtain political news directly from the media without having to rely on other people's stories. However, this does not mean that direct communication became less important and even completely disappeared. Still, I observed that the Indonesian diaspora were eager to attend meetings with homeland political figures, such as Indonesian presidents, ministers, and parliamentary members, who came to diaspora. Here, mediatization of politics highlights the amalgamation of experiencing the transnational-homeland politics through the act of media consumption and the diaspora's participation in direct-physical political activism in the country of origin's political sphere. Nevertheless, for many members of the Indonesian diaspora, for the various reasons that have been discussed previously, they prefer to rely more upon a mediatized experience for their political activism rather than on a more direct and non-

mediated involvement. I believe that eventually this will further establish these people's status as the audiences of transnational-homeland political news.

There was another reason people in diaspora tended to turn to media when they engaged in the home country's political matters. Since members of diaspora were physically displaced from their country of origin and its political sphere, they thought they were distanced from both homeland political institutions and political processes. Moreover, unlike those diaspora who live in Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles, many Indonesian diaspora did not have the presence of homeland government representatives, such as the Indonesian Embassy and Consulates, thus, they might be further disconnected from direct experience with Indonesian politics. For them, mediatization of homeland politics, enabled by advanced media technology in the country of settlement, might be the only available option. Nevertheless, members of the Indonesian diaspora in the two metropolises involved in this study reported that their direct experience of homeland politics, such as participating in political activism like political demonstrations in front of the Capitol, political discussions in the mosque, and political activities organized by the home country's government representatives in the host country were used mostly to complement rather than to substitute, their mediatized political participation. Once again, I argue that by exercising the practice of mediatization of politics, many members of the Indonesian diaspora played a role more as transnational audiences of the homeland political news rather than as 'actual' transnational-homeland political activists.

Meanwhile, changes within the media environment also highlight the practice of mediatization of politics demonstrated by people in diaspora. In terms of transnational



political participation in the home country's politics, some members of the Indonesian diaspora in the US experienced a gradual change of their media environment, while others may have found the change to be rapid, especially those newcomer diaspora. As a latecomer, Andre compared his first arrival in the US in the mid-1980s when he could only rely on Indonesian print magazines. These were already outdated since the latest edition wasn't available in the US until two weeks after the initial publication, he revealed that the media technology in the US had gradually changed to be better, faster, and widely available, especially in enabling him to access current news from his country of origin. For instance, during the 1998 May Riot, Andre was able to closely monitor political developments in Indonesia through the Internet. He thought he was fortunate to have Internet access at that time because it gave him the latest information, far faster than before, about the changes in the Indonesian political sphere, mainly related to the downfall of Suharto's authoritarian regime, faster than before. Years later, increasing advancement in media technology in the country of settlement, such as the wide availability of social media, smart phones and online streaming of Indonesian television channels, has allowed Indonesian diaspora like Andre not only to be more aware of contemporary political news in the country of origin, but has also increased their dependency upon media to (re)connect with the transnational-homeland politics. For this reason, it can be argued that the advancement of media technology has amplified the mediatization of politics experienced by members of the Indonesian diaspora. I suggest that this would help them further maintain their long-distance engagement in the home

country's political discussion, especially when direct and physical experiences of Indonesian politics are not always possible.

Following the current updates about home country political issues and events as part of the experience of mediatization of politics can be both positive and negative. On one hand, I found that by accessing home country media members of diaspora could easily monitor political developments in the far distant homeland without having to spend much money and time. Moreover, these media could conveniently deliver Indonesian political news to diaspora's television screens in their living rooms as well as to the smart phones in their hands. As a result, media enable people in diaspora to be more aware with the homeland political discourse, and to engage even in political matters. On the other hand, I argue that by relying more, perhaps too much, upon media for homeland political news means that members of diaspora were also following media logic, and were even being restricted by how the media operate. This means that there is a higher possibility that the knowledge about and awareness of Indonesian politics of the people in diaspora would be limited to what has been represented by the homeland media. The Indonesian diaspora can further engage in Indonesian political discourse only if the issues are available on media. As a result, what is not presented by media will be missing from diaspora's attention as well.

Moreover, unpredictable consequences of mediatization of politics arose among members of the Indonesian diaspora in Los Angeles. Homeland political news became increasingly available to people in diaspora, and thus, exemplified the mediatized experience of the home country's political processes. Unfortunately, many people in

diaspora regarded this as problematic. When political content from Indonesia became abundant, even too abundant, many members of the Indonesian diaspora were confused about selecting which information was most important and relevant. Doni explained his situation:

In the past, it was difficult for us to obtain information from Indonesia. But now, what happened is the overflow of information. We became perplexed, unable to identify which one is the correct information. We are unable to understand the context. I am afraid that what we understand here is different than what people in Indonesia understand. Now we have too much information, but much of it is no longer important. Suppose that I went from Tasik to Bandung in the past, it took me three hours when there was no highway at the time. After the highway was available, it required only one and a half hours to travel. But nowadays, it still takes me three hours since the highway became congested by the traffic. (personal communication, December 27, 2014)

Within this sense, as the primary means for transnational Indonesians to engage in the homeland politics, media were seen both as blessing and curse. The availability of media content from the country of origin was beneficial for diaspora's transnational political participation, yet it would be difficult for them to navigate when the information was overloaded. For some members of diaspora, information related to Indonesian politics seems to be nearly limitless on the Internet. As explained previously, just by surfing on the Internet, Googling, or opening Facebook, they could easily, and sometimes automatically, be exposed to political news from the country of origin. The problem is,

“with more and more media material available, media users have themselves to be selective as there is a limited capacity for what one can grasp in the 24 hours of the day” (Lundby, 2016, p. 33). Moreover, when the supply of information surpasses the capacity of the audience to digest it (Eppler & Mengis, 2004), this may lead to a poor decision-making as well as the failure of attention (Davis, 2011; Jacoby, Speller & Kohn, 1974). As a result, it became more difficult for members of diaspora to clarify whether news about one political issue in the homeland was really important, or even trustworthy, since there were too many news options available.

I also found that socio-cultural conditions in the host country were important for highlighting the nature of mediatized long-distance political engagement of members of diaspora. To some extent, living far away from the homeland, such as living in America, detached some members of the Indonesian diaspora from their home country’s serious issues like political news since these people preferred the host country’s popular and entertaining media content during their leisure time. Although they they still occasionally read and watched Indonesian political news, I argue that their fondness for various American mainstream media content would eventually stifle their awareness of the context of political discourse in the homeland.

As a member of the Indonesian diaspora who has lived in the US for more than 10 years, Doni argued that many people in diaspora thought that having experienced changes in their socio-cultural environment— being an Indonesian living in a foreign country for a long period of time—meant they often missed the context of homeland political discourse. It may be true that members of diaspora would still read about or watch the

news of one specific political event, but this would not prevent their missing the ‘bigger picture’ of that particular case.

Often, people preferred to read flashes and short news, and thus, tended to avoid lengthy written and in-depth journalistic works. This was especially true because many people in diaspora said they regularly consumed homeland political news via online news portals and news links shared by their peers on social media. Even if they had time to spend in front of the (streaming) television to watch Indonesian political news, this was not a common practice of members of diaspora. Furthermore, it is important to notice that what members of the Indonesian diaspora could access was only a partial, peripheral segment of the home country’s political reality, transmitted by homeland media only after editorial selection had been made by journalists.

Moreover, being distanced from the homeland rendered these displaced nationals less able, impossible for some people, to crosscheck whether their mediatized experience of Indonesian politics resonated with the real-life political condition in Indonesia. Even if living far from the homeland did not disconnect members of diaspora from their home country’s political sphere, it is most likely that their physical absence would still detach them from the political reality there. For the same reason, being displaced from the home country has contributed to the Indonesian diaspora being distanced from the context of the politics in their country of origin, regardless of the availability of homeland political news.

Likewise, Hamdi, an Indonesian diasporan who was taking into account changes in the socio-cultural environment, shared his hesitation concerning his status as a

transnational audience of the homeland political news. Although he was thankful to have experienced the changes of media environment that further connected him with the home country's political sphere, Hamdi kept asking himself, "What's the benefit of engaging in Indonesian politics to our livelihood here (in diaspora)? It's like sowing salt in the ocean, it would not have a major impact to our life in America." Some members of the Indonesian diaspora like Hamdi, addressed the increasing opportunity to participate in transnational-homeland politics through media pessimistically rather than embracing it as empowering to their long-distance nationalism. Therefore, transnational-homeland politics, as mediatized and regularly consumed by people in diaspora, does not always offer an emancipatory lifestyle among nationals abroad, especially when the experience of being displaced from the country of origin is included in how they perceive long-distance political participation.

Indeed, in the context of mediatization of transnational-homeland politics, the consequences of changes of 'home' and physical displacement(s) experienced by members of the Indonesian diaspora, could cause further problems with the notion of diaspora as transnational audiences of home country's political news. Even though use of media, digital media in particular, did not always correlate with the increase of people's political knowledge— as with some members of the Indonesian diaspora in the US— homeland media use should still be considered important in both enabling and encouraging political participation (Dimitrova, Shehata, Strömbäck & Nord, 2014).

## **Giving Voice to the Voiceless: Opportunities and Challenges of Mediatization of Politics**

The nature of mediatization of transnational-homeland political participation exhibited by members of the Indonesian diaspora, in both the Washington, D. C. and the Los Angeles metropolitan areas, implies that some opportunities can still be offered to current political involvement of Indonesian nationals, regardless their country of settlement. First, because of the increasing availability of access to homeland media for people in diaspora, it can be argued that this phenomenon would encourage transnational people to further express their political opinions concerning their country of origin's political development. In other words, mediatization of transnational politics has a significant role in giving voiceless people a voice. I argue that in the past, members of diaspora were regarded more as a passive audience of homeland politics, mainly due to limited access to both the home country's media and its political processes. Following the gradual changes and developments of media technology as well as sociocultural and political changes, the Indonesian diaspora began to have a wider opportunity to participate in Indonesian politics, and even to speak up for their political rights as displaced nationals. This was evident even in a minute and peripheral mediatized political act of liking a Facebook post about Indonesian political news. For some transnational Indonesians, this was never enough. More outspoken political activists in diaspora tended to use media to amplify their political opinions, circulating pictures of themselves or their colleagues campaigning for Indonesian political issues from diaspora throughout social media, and even sending the message to mainstream news media in the country of origin.

Second, mediatization of homeland politics offers an alternative space for the Indonesian diaspora to exercise their political interests. While not all members of diaspora could remain physically involved in the real-life Indonesian political processes, many people could simply engage in a mediatized political environment. Here I argue that social media in particular had become one of the main fora for transnational political engagement since it allowed wider participation for Indonesians, both from the homeland and overseas, to discuss the same political issues. If the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) was able to optimize the use of social media for their transnational political and military actions (Layton, 2015), I believe that it is possible that the Indonesian diaspora could also maximize this non-mainstream medium to practice transnational-homeland politics. It is true that in the past, many Indonesian diaspora, especially members of the separatist movement of GAM exploited the newer media technologies of that time (e.g., mobile phones, online mailing lists, and internet sites) to magnify their political influence to the homeland (Missbach, 2012). However, in a more positive tone, I argue that mediatization of long-distance political activism should not be limited to deviant political practices like separatism and terrorism as demonstrated by GAM and ISIS but should provide an opportunity for more constructive transnational political engagement.

In addition to opportunities, I also propose some challenges to the mediatization of transnational politics exhibited by the Indonesian diaspora in the US. While in this current study it has been found that social media had encouraged increasing public participation in mediatized transnational-homeland political processes, either as producers, distributors, or consumers of political content, the involvement of Indonesians



in political activism through online and social media can still be considered as problematic.

The case of the Indonesian diaspora's engagement in mediatized political activism of the homeland politics resonates with Lim's (2013) investigation of socio-political activities in Indonesia. In her study, Lim explained that socio-political activism in Indonesia tends to "impersonate popular culture, associated with low risk activism" (640). Apparently, a similar pattern of political engagement through social media has been demonstrated by people in diaspora. For these people the use of social media for political participation has functioned as a way to associate themselves with the current popular political culture demonstrated by their fellow nationals in the homeland (e.g., political campaigning both in public spaces and through online media). I also believe that people in diaspora would eventually follow, and even copy, what is currently trending in their homeland, including the mode of political participation, in addition to talking about the current political issues that have been debated by the Indonesian public. Similar to the trend in the contemporary Indonesian political sphere, many members of the Indonesian diaspora were more likely to participate in low risk and peripheral (transnational) political activism, mainly by following current updates about the home country's political situation through their Facebook pages or Twitter timelines.

Moreover, for Sandoval-Almazan and Gil-Gracia (2014), the use of newer media platforms for political activities has been considered more as complementary or as an alternative, and not the most substantial, political activism. As they further argued, cyber activism, such as using online media to disseminate political information and arranging

protests, mainly functioned as a support for the actual political practice. Consequently, appropriation of online media for politics-related practices has been reduced to 'easy' political activism, promoting the derogatory term *clicktivism* (Halupka, 2014).

Considered inferior to traditional political participation, which emphasizes physical and non-mediated involvement, clicktivism is seen by Halupka (2014) as, "a lazy or overly convenient alternative to the effort and legitimacy of traditional engagement" (p. 116). In this view, the Indonesian diaspora's increasing reliance upon homeland media to exercise their political interests in the Indonesian political sphere would also denote this banal activism.

However, while those previous studies might indicate that mediatization of politics, especially through people's dependency upon online and social media to engage in political discourse, to be trivial, here I would like to argue that no matter how peripheral, banal, lazy, and overwhelmingly convenient it may be, diaspora members' participation in long-distance politics of their homeland should be given fair credit. On one hand, it might be true that a mediatized political involvement is much too different to be compared to a real-life and physical political engagement. I argue that comparing these two would be like comparing apples to oranges. On the other hand, mediatized political participation should be understood not as the final end of transnational people's effort to participate in the political matters of their country of origin but rather as a starting point. Therefore, those who took their initial steps in transnational-homeland political participation by regularly consuming Indonesian political news in diaspora

might still have ample opportunity to expand their political participation into more concrete political activism in the near future.

Another challenge encountered by members of diaspora in their practice of mediatization of transnational politics is the issue of unfairness in the flow of political information. As part of the criticism of the influence of globalization on the transnational flow of information, McKenzie (2006) mentioned that information tends to be unidirectional, moving from one particular country to another country and not vice versa. In the case of the Indonesian diaspora in the US, what mostly happened was that these displaced nationals consumed homeland political news from their country of origin, while less political information created in diaspora was sent back to the home country. It is true that some members of diaspora had tried to share information related to their political activities in the US to their fellow nationals in Indonesia, yet, this was only minimal. In addition, there was little evidence that this kind of information about diaspora's homeland political engagement was seen as significant by people in Indonesia. For this reason, even though there might be an increasing trend of mediatization of politics exhibited by members of diaspora, their transnational political engagement in the home country's politics may not be fully recognized as essential by the homeland politicians. Certainly, media have given a voice to diaspora to speak out about their opinions on the homeland political development. Nevertheless, that voice was not loud enough to be clearly heard by people involved in the political processes in Indonesia.

Arguably, this issue is related to the nature of Indonesian political systems that cannot simply be overcome by increasing mediatization of diaspora's political

engagement. Some of my informants admitted that no matter how actively they participated in long-distance political activism in diaspora, they were still unsure whether their efforts would matter for political change in Indonesia. Moreover, in one of my discussions with Shohib, he insisted that it would be unlikely that Indonesian politicians would pay much attention to the voice of people in diaspora despite increasing diasporic use of media for political participation. In his opinion, those politicians would carefully calculate the cost of reaching out to members of diaspora. Rather than allocating significant funds to visit Indonesian constituents in the US, Shohib suspected Indonesian politicians might prefer to spend their money on political advertisements on Indonesian television instead. As a consequence, the voice of diaspora may never be a priority for many Indonesian policy-makers.

### **Conclusions: Expanding the Study of Mediatization of Transnational Politics**

Previous chapters have been used to investigate how and to what extent mediatization of transnational politics occurred in the case of the Indonesian diaspora's engagement in their homeland political sphere, including what factors contributed to this process. Each chapter has been built up to illustrate how mediatization of transnational-homeland politics should never be considered as a monolithic media-enabled and media-saturated long-distance political participation. I aimed to cover some fundamental topics of socio-demographics of Indonesian diasporic communities in the two metropolises of Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles. I investigated how people in diaspora appropriated various media platforms to stay connected with homeland political matters, in addition to examining how these issues were related to the construction of their mediatized

experience of home country politics. Within this concluding section, I summarize my research findings and further explain how these results corresponded to the research questions proposed earlier. Additionally, I discuss how the research findings contribute to the future research agenda concerning both mediatization of politics and long-distance political participation of transnational people.

**Summary.** While I was conducting my fieldwork, in both the Washington, D. C. and the Los Angeles metropolitan areas, I frequently discovered how members of diaspora appropriated their diasporic experience as well as the sociocultural environment to enhance their transnational connection with their country of origin. This was the main topic of Chapter V. Within this chapter, I also provided an overview of the livelihood of members of the Indonesian diaspora in both locales as the context of the research, and hypothesized how this would contribute to their practice of transnationalism. Their migration pattern, moreover, was found to be one important issue to be included in our understanding of why members of diaspora in each metropolitan area developed their sense of community.

Through various associations based on ethnicity and/or religion, they aimed for a stronger bond among the members of diaspora. Later, these associations helped them to intensify their long-distance connections with the homeland. This was a common feature of ‘transnationalism from below’ demonstrated by these displaced nationals. Meanwhile, the role of ‘transnationalism from above’ as exhibited by the homeland government’s representatives in diaspora (e.g., the presence of Embassy and Consulate) was also significant in amplifying these people’s transnational activism, mainly in assisting these

members of diaspora to further engage in diverse issues related to the country of origin (e.g., assisting the voting processes during the election). Eventually, the growth of the Indonesian community in both locales resulted in the presence of physical diasporic public spaces, which further encouraged meetings on a regular basis for people in diaspora so they could develop more intimate involvements in transnational-homeland matters, including politics. Afterwards, they began to establish a trans-local connection among members of diaspora in the US, especially between members of diaspora communities on the West Coast and the East Coast through the IDN, which was initiated during the first Congress of Indonesian Diaspora in Los Angeles in Summer, 2012. Yet, as argued by the IDN's President, Al-Arief, we still have to wait for much more concrete evidence of the effectiveness of this trans-local diasporic bond.

Taking into account the increasing presence of the Indonesian diaspora in both metropolises, I argue that it was reasonable that the demand for the most current information related to their country of origin would also increase. In the case of Indonesians in Los Angeles, having their own diaspora publications had provided an alternative mode for obtaining the latest news and information about their homeland. Nevertheless, not all transnational Indonesians regarded these diaspora media as their primary source of political information. Even though most of the publications were relatively cheap, members of diaspora seldom relied on them to access the most updated news from Indonesia.

Many members of diaspora appropriated multiple media platforms to engage in the Indonesian political discourse. In Chapter VI, I explored the diasporic media use

exhibited by people in diaspora (in parallel with their consumption of host country's media content) and examined how this practice was one of the primary features of mediatization of transnational-homeland political participation. How members of the Indonesian diaspora used media was also an intriguing case here. On one hand, Georgiou (2006) explained that, "diasporic populations are integrated in media cultures as much as people who live in highly mediated, advanced capitalist societies of the West" (p. 91). Like any other American audiences, the Indonesian diaspora indicated their preference for the high quality production of their host country's media content, especially for entertainment purposes. Moreover, these people had a tendency to become attached to watching television during their leisure time and to access (American) entertainment content. Meanwhile, they devoted themselves to mobile phones while they were mobile, mostly to obtain the latest news and information through online news and social media, similar to the trend exhibited by the general American media users (Smith, 2015). On the other hand, Indonesians in diaspora could not acquire much political information related to their homeland country's politics through the host country's media; this is one reason members of diaspora thought that mainstream media of the country of settlement were inadequate in providing news about their homeland (Christiansen, 2004). They had to rely mostly on the homeland media. The problem was that the official channel to Indonesian broadcast media was limited or even unavailable in the US. As a result, these people needed to develop distinctive strategies to overcome this major obstacle, mainly by accessing homeland media content, political content in particular, through online

media. From here on, they could access most of the content from Indonesian media, which further encouraged their long-distance participation in Indonesian politics.

Mediatization of long-distance politics occurred in two major forms of transnational political engagement: electoral and non-electoral participations. Electoral political practices were exemplified in the Indonesian diaspora's membership in home country political parties as well as their involvement in political campaigns and voting processes during the national elections. Meanwhile, non-electoral practices were more associated with civic participation, such as being involved in diaspora associations. To some extent, I assumed that this would lead up into more politics-related activities like attending public meetings with the homeland politicians who came to diaspora, and lobbying and campaigning for various home country political issues. To some extent, these two categories of political engagement highlight the phases within the mediatization processes: extension, substitution, amalgamation, and accommodation.

Media extended the reach of many members of diaspora to the political processes situated thousand miles away in the country of origin. Eventually, I argue, the increasing dependency upon media to experience their homeland politics would lead to the presumption that a mediatized experience could displace the real-life and physical involvement in the political processes of the country of origin. I found that this was a common practice exhibited by members of diaspora who regarded using media to engage in Indonesian politics as more convenient, or because they encountered some barriers that prevented their fully participating in non-mediatized homeland politics. Those with more flexibility could exercise long-distance political practices both with the media and



without it, and some even performed a combination of these two activities. Here, mediatization scholars argued that politics became highly mediatized when these practices were intertwined (Schulz, 2004; Strömbäck & Esser, 2014). Finally, when the transnational-homeland political involvement was accommodating more to the practice of media use, I argued that media logic had become superior to political logic. As a result, people in diaspora can be regarded as experiencing a mediatized politics rather than an ‘actual’ political engagement.

Furthermore, the mediatized experience of transnational-homeland political participation was shaped at a meeting of media-related and non-media factors, where previously Couldry and Hepp (2013) stated that the main function of mediatization is to analyze, “the interrelation between changes in media and communications on the one hand, and changes in culture and society on the other” (p. 197). I further exemplified these factors in Chapter VII. For many people in diaspora, structural barriers were seen as limiting their access to media as their primary mode of transnational political engagement. Renouncing the significant role of availability, the audience and the media, the degree of mediatization of long-distance politics was found to be highly associated with these issues. Moreover, individual factors like audience motivation —whether their media use was based on instrumental or ritual motives—as well as individual characteristics, such as audience’s socio-economic status, age, and gender, were also included within the analysis. While these factors were found to be important, it needs to be noted that there was no singularity in terms of the way members of diaspora appropriated media to perform transnational political engagement. In addition, if we

talked about the diversity of media behavior of the people in diaspora, Georgiou (2006) previously explained that, “different media play different roles as they require various levels of participation, concentration, effort, financial ability, access and familiarity with information and communication technologies” (p. 82). Therefore, I argue that this would heighten the multifaceted nature of the practice of media use, especially in the case of displaced audiences like the diaspora community.

However, I am less convinced that the degree of mediatization of transnational politics is only associated with the practice of media use along with its contributing factors. For this reason, I turned into Østergaard-Nielsen’s (2003b) analysis of determinants of the Turkish diaspora’s homeland political engagement, where she explained that at least two primary aspects need to be included in the conversation: homeland and host land conditions. The first is more related to how the political development in the country of origin would encourage people in diaspora to engage in homeland politics, or in reverse. During the conflict or tension periods in the home country, there is a tendency for members of diaspora to pay more attention to the homeland, and be even further involved in the practice of long-distance politics, yet this might decrease when the conflict has ended (Missbach, 2010, 2012). Similarly, within this study, I found that the Indonesian diaspora tended to be actively involved in the mediatization of transnational politics during the political tensions of the national elections of 2014, and their political involvement also gradually decreased in the following months.

Simultaneously, the issue of an individual's previous experience with homeland politics also came into the surface. Following this line of argument, people who had already had a bad experience with Indonesian politics tended to keep their interest in political matters as minimal as possible. To the contrary, members of diaspora who were previously active in political activism were also more eager to participate in the homeland politics from diaspora. I argue that these politically active diaspora demonstrated a higher degree of mediatization of politics, at least by practicing a more regular consumption of Indonesian political news. In this situation, media's role should be seen as reinforcing preexisting attitudes toward homeland politics.

Even though Østergaard-Nielsen's (2003b) argument that the host country's conditions should be noted as a determining factor of transnational political engagement, I found it is more difficult to have a definite answer regarding its role in the mediatization of long-distance politics. It may be true that members of diaspora with secured and privileged socio-economic positions in the country of settlement tend to have a higher chance of performing active homeland political participation, such as becoming active members of various political groups, even travelling back home to the country of origin to engage in political lobbies. Time and money were not the problem. This was in contrast to the members of diaspora who had time and financial constraints. Nevertheless, I argue that does not mean these people were absent from homeland political participation since they could still be involved in the political discourse at least through media use. Moreover, as been argued by Benedict Anderson (1992, 1994, 1998), the more people in diaspora feel they are being marginalized within the host society, the

more likely they are to engage in long-distance political activism, not only because it is more convenient but also because it is regarded as more secure. Far from being excluded from the political discourse, Indonesians in diaspora, both privileged and less privileged, reported having very much the same opportunity to engage in the homeland political processes, thanks to the increasing availability of media.

Last but not least, the practice of mediatization of transnational politics also brought along some problems, as well as opportunities, with it. The practice of following media logic, as one of the main features of mediatization, has contributed to the serious problems encountered by some members of diaspora when they wanted to be further involved in political news consumption. Not only did they think there was too much information about homeland politics available in diaspora, they also reported having only limited time to consume and to contextualize those information. This had prevented their being able to clarify which one was more important and relevant. The issues of bias and lack of professionalism exhibited by homeland media workers were also brought up by some people in diaspora during the conversations, yet this did not prevent them from consuming homeland political news. Nevertheless, mediatization of transnational-homeland politics was still considered by these people to offer a better opportunity for displaced citizens to maintain, and even to further enhance, connections with the country of origin's political processes, which previously had been limited. For transnational Indonesians, media was regarded as giving voice to diaspora, previously unheard, a better chance to be heard by political actors in the home country.

**Implications for future research.** Regarding its contribution to better understanding of media use and the practice of mediatization of transnational-homeland politics, I argue that this current study offers a more intriguing illustration of how people in diaspora appropriated media for their long-distance political participation depending on various dimensions. Specifically, I have demonstrated how media-related factors, such as media and audience availability as well as access to media, were interrelated with non-media factors, including the homeland political development and the structural position of members of diaspora in the host society among other things. For many Indonesian diaspora, mediatization of transnational politics, especially through newer technologies of online media, social media and smart phones, had enabled them to further participate with the home country's politics despite various barriers, including time, spatial, and financial obstacles.

Overall, even though this dissertation does not have an attempt to make any generalization of its findings into a larger context of diaspora, I argue that the case of mediatization of transnational-homeland politics exhibited by members of Indonesian diaspora in the US can also be contextualized into different diasporic communities in various countries. While, to some extent, each diasporic group might experience their homeland politics differently, the increasing presence of advanced media technologies in the country of settlement, most notably in developed countries, will further amplify their regular long-distance engagement in their country of origin's political matters through media, as proposed by this current study. However, this qualitative audience research did not aim to find a causal relationship or statistical interaction among these factors

associated with the processes of mediatization of politics experienced by members of diaspora. Therefore, to complement the research findings of this current study, empirical examinations to measure the interrelationships between the changes in media and sociocultural environment that utilize quantitative surveys are also encouraged.

Moreover, concerning implications for future study, I have identified four additional major dimensions that can be taken into account from this current dissertation project. First, it is important to recognize the significance of audience research to understand the complexity of transnational practices exhibited by diaspora, especially in the case of how various media are being appropriated as the primary mode of engagement in the homeland political processes. Rather than using a macro level of analysis, ethnographic audience research offers a more minute observation of these displaced citizens' media/political attitudes and behaviors in a mundane everyday life context. Conducting media research with the focus on members of diaspora as transnational audiences can provide a more nuanced understanding of this complex phenomenon rather than aiming for a singularity or a generalization of diasporic experience of media and transnational politics.

Second, my study of transnational political participation of diaspora, has brought media to the center of the analysis of this increasingly complex experience of de-territorialized nationals in their efforts to maintain connections with the political sphere of their country of origin. In this study of the long-distance political engagement of Indonesians in the US, media became the primary mode and even the pre-existing condition, for members of diaspora to further exercise their political interests. For this

reason, more attention should be given by the scholarship of politics and diaspora to the increasing role of media in enabling and amplifying such transnational practice.

Similarly, following Morley's (2009) argument, I propose that media scholars should also be encouraged to use a multidisciplinary approach in understanding the increasing popular practice of using media for transnational political involvement in particular, which has been proposed by mediatization scholars.

For mediatization theorists, it is important to examine a complex phenomenon using a multidisciplinary perspective. Nevertheless, as media scholars, we still need to reemphasize the significance of media theory in our analysis of the case being studied. As for Adolf (2011), mediatization research can be considered as a 'mediatic turn' in studying the increasing importance of media in our social lives. A similar explanation provided by Hepp, Hjarvard and Lundby (2015) follows:

The ambition of mediatization studies is to engage in cross-disciplinary work with, for instance, political scientists or educational researchers, but in order to make such an effort worthwhile for all involved, media and communication researchers must be able to bring something to the table. In our experience the framework of mediatization research has already proved its ability to bridge various disciplines in fruitful ways. (p. 316)

For this reason, not only is mediatization theory encouraging a multidisciplinary approach in the examination of various social, cultural, and political phenomena, this theoretical framework is also offering a wider opportunity to understand a particular case using a cross-disciplinary perspective. Therefore, as argued by Hepp et al. (2015),

mediatization is not a media-centric but rather a media-centered theoretical framework, where the media theory is being placed as an important analytical tool in the exploration of media's influence on other dimensions in our everyday life.

Third, this study also emphasizes the use of mediatization theory as the primary theoretical framework in the investigation of transnational politics exhibited by members of diaspora. As discussed in the previous sections, mediatization theory has been beneficial in the examination of both changes in media environment and socio-cultural dimensions, where in the case of diaspora's engagement in long-distance politics became increasingly complex. Even though early mediatization scholars devoted more attention to using the sociological approach to study mediatization processes (Hjarvard, 2013), this dissertation aims to contribute to expanding the literature by providing a micro-level analysis of mediatization with the focus on members of diaspora as individuals rather than on a societal level. Therefore, I argue that future research on diasporic media behavior, including the practice of media use for transnational engagement in social, economic, or cultural matters, could take advantage of the appropriation of mediatization theory.

Fourth, this dissertation project took advantage of multi-sited media ethnography, which was found to be beneficial in the exploration of transnational practice of the Indonesian diaspora's mediatized long-distance politics. Not only did this methodological approach enable the researcher to observe, and even participate in, the practice of transnational mediatized politics, the use of a multi-sited method was also beneficial in enabling the researcher to compare, as well as to find connections, between diasporic



communities being studied living in two different sites—the Washington, D. C. and the Los Angeles metropolitan areas. In this view, the current study reinforces the appropriation of this ethnographic research approach in making sense of the cross-border relationships between people in diaspora and the political sphere of the country of origin, mainly by focusing on everyday uses of homeland media content, especially political content.

Nevertheless, this research is limited to the attempt to understand the increasing interconnectedness of media and diaspora's transnational political behavior, especially in the case of transnational Indonesians in the US. Consequently, the result of this study should be framed within the context of the data collected for this particular research. Furthermore, the role of the researcher as a native-ethnographer, including how I experienced the fieldwork, should be included in how we may interpret the study. In practice, I was only able to spend a limited time in the fieldwork in each location, which might have prevented me from being able to fully explore the wider diversity of both locations and people being studied. Even though a similar issue was encountered by previous multi-sited ethnographers (Georgiou, 2006; Hannerz, 2004), I would still recommend it for future research that allocates sufficient time for fieldwork in order to investigate such complex phenomenon of mediatized transnational political engagement of diaspora. In doing so, it can be expected that a longitudinal examination of mediatization of politics could contribute to a more in-depth understanding of these phenomena of the increasing role of media and communication to other sociocultural dimensions of the society, in particular, politics (Elmelund-Præstekær, Hopman &

Nørgaard, 2011). As a result, this study would help the future research to better understand mediatization in both historical and long-term processes (Krotz, 2009, 2014; Lundby, 2014). Further to this, it would be beneficial to expand the study of diasporic transnational connection to the examination of (actual) homeland politics, such as conducting fieldwork in the country of origin. By examining the both ends, it can be argued that researchers could obtain a more rounded illustration of the cross-border interactions between the home country's political sphere and the members of diaspora's mediatized transnational-homeland political engagement.

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## Appendix A: Ohio University Consent Form

Title of Research:

**Media Use and Mediatization of Transnational Political Participation:  
The Case of Transnational Indonesians Living in the United States**

Researchers: Yearry Panji Setianto

You are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

### EXPLANATION OF STUDY

This study is being done because there is a need to understand what, how and why Indonesians living in the US use media, especially to participate with Indonesian politics.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in an interview that covers several topics, such as how often do you access media, how do you use media related to your participation in Indonesian politics, and your opinion on Indonesian media in providing information about Indonesian politics.

You should not participate in this study if you are both unwilling to reveal your media behavior related to your political participation with Indonesian politics. In addition, if you are younger than 18 or older than 60 you should not participate in this study.

Your participation in the study will last no more than 45 minutes.

### Risks and Discomforts

No risks or discomforts are anticipated.

### Benefits

Although you may not personally benefit from participating, your contribution to this study will help bring a social benefit. This study is important to science/society because it will give a better understanding for the society about how and why media are being used by transnational people to mediate political participation with their home country's politics, and

thus, could promote a better way to understand the relationship between media and transnational communities.

The anticipated benefit derived from this study is a better understanding of media's role in transnational people's political participation with their homeland politics. Increased understanding of this phenomenon will help the transnational people as politically marginalized citizens to utilize media as a way to express their political rights. Moreover, this study aims to contribute to current scholarship of media and politics, especially in the context of transnational community.

### Confidentiality and Records

Your study information will be kept confidential by the researcher. The interview will be audio-recorded and it will be saved for the research purpose within the researcher's personal computer in a password-protected folder. The recording will be completely erased within six months after the actual interview (approximately around August 2014). If you are also willing to fill out the media diary, your data will be also treated the same as the interview. By using a similar method to secure both data, this approach will help the researcher to connect the data as well as to guarantee the confidentiality of participant's information.

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:

- \* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
- \* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;

### Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact ***[Yearyy Setianto at (740)818-8032 or Dr. Drew McDaniel at (740)593-4855]***

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.

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By signing below, you are agreeing that:

- you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered
- you have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction.
- you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study
- you are 18 years of age or older
- your participation in this research is completely voluntary
- you may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are

otherwise entitled.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Ohio University Consent Form  
Indonesian Version

Judul Penelitian:

**Penggunaan Media dan Mediatisasi Partisipasi Politik Transnasional  
Studi Kasus pada Transnasional Indonesia di Amerika Serikat**

Peneliti: Yearry Panji Setianto

Anda akan diminta untuk ikut berpartisipasi di dalam penelitian ini. Untuk dapat memutuskan apakah anda bersedia atau tidak untuk terlibat dalam penelitian ini, anda diharapkan memahami tentang tujuan serta potensi resiko maupun manfaat dari penelitian ini. Proses ini dikenal dengan istilah informed consent atau lembar persetujuan. Berkas ini menjelaskan tentang tujuan, prosedur, potensi manfaat dan resiko penelitian. Dalam berkas ini juga dijelaskan tentang bagaimana informasi yang anda berikan kepada peneliti akan digunakan dan dilindungi. Setelah anda membaca berkas ini dan pertanyaan anda tentang penelitian ini telah terjawab, anda akan diminta untuk menandatangani. Dengan demikian, anda dinyatakan bersedia untuk berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Anda akan diberikan kopi dari berkas ini.

PENJELASAN TENTANG PENELITIAN

Penelitian ini dilakukan dikarenakan kebutuhan akan pemahaman tentang bagaimana dan mengapa warga Indonesia yang tinggal di Amerika menggunakan media, terutama terkait dengan praktik partisipasi politik.

Jika anda bersedia berpartisipasi, anda akan diminta ikut serta dalam wawancara yang mencakup sejumlah pertanyaan, seperti seberapa sering anda mengakses media, bagaimana anda menggunakan media terkait dengan partisipasi politik, dan bagaimana pandangan anda tentang peran media Indonesia dalam menyediakan informasi tentang politik Indonesia.

Anda boleh menolak untuk berpartisipasi jika anda merasa keberatan untuk menceritakan tentang perilaku anda dalam mengakses media terkait dengan partisipasi politik dengan politik Indonesia. Selain itu, jika anda berusia dibawah 18 atau diatas 60 tahun, anda boleh tidak berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini.

Partisipasi anda dalam penelitian ini diharapkan tidak akan melebihi 45 menit.

**Resiko dan ketidaknyamanan**

Tidak ada potensi resiko ataupun ketidaknyamanan dari penelitian ini.

## Manfaat

Meskipun secara pribadi anda tidak akan mendapat keuntungan dari penelitian ini, partisipasi anda dalam penelitian ini dapat memberikan kontribusi secara sosial.

Penelitian ini dianggap penting bagi keilmuan/masyarakat karena diharapkan dapat memberikan pemahaman kepada masyarakat umum tentang bagaimana dan mengapa media digunakan oleh masyarakat transnasional sebagai mediasi dalam konteks partisipasi politik dengan politik di tanah air, sehingga mampu menambah pemahaman kita tentang hubungan antara media dan komunitas transnasional.

Manfaat yang diharapkan dari penelitian ini adalah meningkatnya pemahaman tentang peran media dalam praktek partisipasi politik di tanah air bagi masyarakat transnasional. Dengan meningkatkan pemahaman tentang fenomena ini, diharapkan dapat membantu masyarakat transnasional untuk dapat keluar dari marjinalisasi politik, sehingga mereka dapat memanfaatkan media untuk mengekspresikan hak berpolitik mereka. Lebih lanjut lagi, penelitian ini bertujuan memberi kontribusi terhadap ranah keilmuan tentang media dan politik, terutama dalam konteks komunitas transnasional.

## Kerahasiaan dan Rekaman

Informasi yang anda berikan akan disimpan secara rahasia oleh peneliti. Interview akan direkam dan disimpan oleh peneliti di dalam computer pribadi dalam folder yang dilengkapi oleh password khusus. Rekaman tersebut akan dihapus seluruhnya dalam jangka enam bulan setelah wawancara (atau sekitar Agustus 2014). Jika anda bersedia mengisi media diari, data anda juga akan diperlakukan sebagaimana data wawancara tadi. Dengan menggunakan metode yang sama untuk mengamankan kedua jenis data tersebut, pendekatan ini akan mempermudah peneliti untuk mengaitkan kedua data sekaligus menjaga kerahasiaan informasi yang diberikan oleh partisipan.

Selain itu, meskipun segala upaya akan dilakukan untuk menjaga informasi yang anda berikan terkait penelitian ini akan dijaga kerahasiaannya, akan ada kemungkinan bahwa informasi dapat dibagikan kepada beberapa pihak, seperti:

- Agen-agen federal, semisal Office of Human Research Protections, yang mana bertanggungjawab dalam menjaga subjek manusia di dalam penelitian.
- Perwakilan Ohio University (OU), termasuk the Institutional Review Board, komite yang bertanggungjawab dalam mengawasi penelitian di bawah bendera OU.

## Kontak dan informasi

Jika anda memiliki sejumlah pertanyaan terkait penelitian ini, silahkan hubungi *[Yearry Setianto di nomor (740)818-8032 atau Dr. Drew McDaniel at (740)593-4855]*

Jika anda memiliki sejumlah pertanyaan tentang hak-hak anda terkait partisipasi anda dalam penelitian ini, silahkan hubungi Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.



Dengan bertanggung di bawah ini, anda menyetujui:

- Anda telah membawa lembar persetujuan (atau telah dibacakan kepada anda) dan anda telah diberikan kesempatan untuk mengajukan pertanyaan dan telah diberikan jawabannya.
- Anda telah diberikan informasi tentang potensi resiko dari penelitian ini dan anda telah puas dengan penjelasan yang diberikan.
- Anda memahami bahwa Ohio University tidak menjamin dana ganti rugi jika terjadi kecelakaan atau cedera akibat partisipasi anda dalam penelitian ini.
- Anda telah berusia 18 tahun ke atas.
- Partisipasi anda dalam penelitian ini sepenuhnya bersifat sukarela
- Anda dapat menghentikan partisipasi anda dalam penelitian ini setiap waktu. Jika anda memutuskan untuk membatalkan partisipasi anda, tidak akan penalty ataupun kerugian apapun bagi anda.

Tanda tangan \_\_\_\_\_ Tanggal \_\_\_\_\_

Nama jelas \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B: Interview Guide**

### **Media Use and Mediatization of Transnational Political Participation: The Case of Transnational Indonesians Living in the United States**

#### **Intro/Warm up:**

- Experience prior becoming an Indonesian living in the United States.

#### **Interviewee backgrounds:**

- The experience of living in the United States.
- Reasons for coming to the United States.
- Problem encountered in the United States. How to deal with it.
- Adjust with the new live in the United States.

#### **Media use topics:**

- The use of media. Frequency, media preference.
- Opinion on the importance of the role of media in everyday life.
- Changes on media behavior while living in the United States compare to prior coming here.
- Use media to connect with people and current events in Indonesia.
- Use media to connect with other Indonesian diasporas in the United States.
- Perception on Indonesian media.
- Informants' habit in accessing Indonesian media. Frequency, preference.
- Opinion on access to Indonesian media.
- Sorts of things that can be accomplished by accessing Indonesian media while living in the United States.

#### **Transnational politics questions:**

- Opinion on Indonesian politics.
- How they define political participation.
- Activities that can be identified as political participation.
- Participation on any activities related to Indonesian politics.
- Obstacle experienced related to political participation in Indonesian politics while living in the United States.
- Changes on political participation in Indonesian politics while in the United States compared to when in Indonesia.
- Relationships between informant's political participations on Indonesian politics and media activities.

- Media activities that can be associated with informant's political participation on Indonesian politics.
- The frequency of and reasons in accessing Indonesian media in a daily basis to obtain information about Indonesian politics.
- The importance of accessing Indonesian media to obtain news and information related to Indonesian politics and the reason behind that opinion.
- Correlation between activities of Indonesian media use and informant's political view.
- The importance of Indonesian media in informant's political participation in Indonesian politics and the reason behind his/her opinion.
- How the media define informant's mode of political participation in Indonesian politics.
- Contributions that Indonesian media have given to informant's capability in participating in Indonesian politics.
- Advantage/disadvantages of using media for political participation.
- Media activities that should be encouraged.
- Willingness to be further involved with Indonesian politics.
- Final comments or questions to ask.

Interview Guide  
(Indonesian Version)

Penggunaan Media dan Mediatisasi Partisipasi Politik Transnasional:  
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**Intro:**

- Pengalaman sebelum menjadi warga Indonesia yang bermukim di Amerika Serikat.

**Latar Belakang informan:**

- Pengalaman tinggal di Amerika.
- Alasan datang ke Amerika.
- Masalah yang dihadapi dan solusinya.
- Menyesuaikan diri dengan kehidupan baru di Amerika.

**Topik tentang penggunaan media:**

- Penggunaan media, frekuensi dan preferensi.
- Pendapat tentang pentingnya peran media dalam kehidupan sehari-hari.
- Perubahan dalam perilaku penggunaan media saat di Amerika dibandingkan dengan sebelum tiba di sini.
- Penggunaan media untuk berhubungan dengan orang-orang dan peristiwa terkini di Indonesia.
- Penggunaan media untuk berhubungan dengan diaspora Indonesia lainnya di Amerika.
- Pendapat tentang media Indonesia.
- Informants' habit in accessing Indonesian media. Frequency, preference.
- Penggunaan media Indonesia, frekuensi dan preferensi.
- Pendapat soal akses terhadap media Indonesia.
- Hal-hal yang dapat dicapai dengan mengakses media Indonesia ketika sedang tinggal di Amerika.

**Topik tentang transnational politik:**

- Pendapat tentang politik Indonesia.
- Bagaimana mendefinisikan/memaknai partisipasi politik.
- Aktivitas yang dapat dilihat sebagai partisipasi politik.
- Pengalaman berpartisipasi dalam politik Indonesia.
- Hambatan terkait berpartisipasi dalam politik Indonesia saat bermukim di Amerika.

- Perubahan dalam partisipasi pada politik Indonesia ketika bermudik di Amerika dibandingkan saat tinggal di Indonesia.
- Hubungan antara partisipasi pada politik Indonesia dengan aktivitas terkait penggunaan media.
- Aktivitas penggunaan media yang dapat dikaitkan dengan partisipasi pada politik Indonesia.
- Frekuensi dan alasan dalam mengakses media Indonesia dalam kehidupan sehari-hari untuk memperoleh informasi tentang politik Indonesia.
- Pentingnya mengakses media Indonesia untuk memperoleh berita dan informasi terkait politik Indonesia, dan alasannya.
- Kaitan antara aktivitas menggunakan media Indonesia dengan pandangan politik informan.
- Pentingnya media Indonesia dalam aktivitas partisipasi pada politik Indonesia dan alasannya.
- Bagaimana media membentuk/mempengaruhi pola partisipasi pada politik Indonesia.
- Sumbangsih media Indonesia pada kemampuan untuk berpartisipasi dalam politik Indonesia.
- Manfaat/kerugian menggunakan media untuk partisipasi politik.
- Aktivitas penggunaan media yang sebaiknya dikembangkan.
- Keinginan untuk terlibat lebih lanjut dalam politik Indonesia.
- Komentar terakhir atau pertanyaan yang ingin diajukan.



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