‘Democracy 1.0’ Meets ‘Web 2.0’: E-Campaigning and the Role of ICTs in Indonesia’s Political Reform Process since 1998

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In recent years the Internet has changed dramatically. The ‘Web 2.0’ with its new technologies such as Twitter, Facebook, or YouTube is now an important tool for social-networking with significant implications for both, the online and offline realms of society and politics. At the same time, while the development of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) has advanced in an unprecedented speed, the spread of such technologies was accompanied with significant political changes in Indonesia since 1998, marking the collapse of the Suharto-regime and the move towards a democratic governance system. After more than three decades of authoritarian rule, ‘democracy 1.0’ has marked a fundamental reform process creating new political parties and allowing the free expression of opinion. While ICTs played a visible yet limited role in this transition process towards a mature democratic system, the role of ‘Web 2.0’ technologies is increasing, especially in election times facilitating the formation of public opinion while connecting citizens to the political process. In systematically analyzing the development of ICTs in Indonesia this study wishes to explain the role that new information technologies play in the political process of this country since 1998, while paying special attention to the most recent parliamentary and presidential elections of 2009. In studying the role of ICTs in political transformation processes and democratic development represents a widely unexplored question in the scholarship addressing the political developments in Southeast Asia. Therefore, this study attempts to address this important new field of research through taking a closer look at Indonesia while applying new theoretic insights generated from the discussion of the concepts of e-government, e-governance, and e-democracy and the links that bind them, online and offline.

KEYWORDS: E-Governance, E-Campaigning, E-Democracy, ICTs, Internet

1. Introduction: Iran’s “Twitter Revolution” and the Politicization of the Internet

This is a study on the role of Information and Communication Technologies (hence ICTs) in the political reform process in Indonesia since 1998. And yet, as we are writing this paper, our main argument that new information technologies play a crucial part in the process of democratization receives its strongest support from somewhere else. As the embattled Iranian government of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is accused of vote rigging in the wake of what has been reported as a landslide election victory for his incumbent government, the supporters of the opposition candidate Mir Hussein Moussavi took the protest to the streets of Teheran. As the government tried to oppress the protests by attacking citizens and by restricting access to the Internet while at the same time constraining the reporting by foreign journalists out of Iran, Moussavi’s supporters and foreign correspondents turned to new online media platforms that circumvent state censorship. The protests on the streets of Teheran and throughout Iran have been coordinated by social-networking sites like Twitter or Facebook which young Iranians used to report in real time about the unfolding events and provide information about meetings, the movement of police forces, or hospitals which would take in the injured. At the same time images and videos circulated on YouTube and other online services that documented the violent crackdown of the protesters by the government and the religious leadership. It was especially the short-messaging service Twitter which obtained a crucial role in the June protests. Actions of the political opposition have been coordinated while the outside of Iran was informed of what took place on the streets of Iranian cities. And while the label “Twitter Revolution” was already reserved for the protests that took place in Moldova in April this year, the use of new technologies in Iran did not stop the second “Twitter Revolution.” For example, it was reported that Moussavi’s support site on Facebook registered more than 52,000 members in the immediate aftermath of the election, while Twitter counted more than 30 tags a minute on the topic of the Iranian election (Stone and Cohen, 2009). Although, it was not what the result of the outcome of the protests would be at the time of writing this article, it has become undeniably clear that in Iran’s politically hot summer the Internet with its new technologies of the ‘Web 2.0’ generation has been deliberately ‘politicalized’ and has played an indispensable role in mobilizing protest and voicing opposition. It is this role of new information technologies that this contribution attempts to analyze as an essential and increasingly indispensable part in the process of democratic political reform.
1.1 Beyond Iran: General Background and Agenda-Setting

That was Iran in June 2009. Let us now turn to the general context of the addressed subject matter. Since the mid-1990s the Internet has evolved into a potentially useful way of facilitating communication between governments, citizens and other agencies of the political arena (West, 2005: 3). Given the increased significance of the Internet it has been widely predicted that this medium will have decisive influence on election campaigning (Kernaghan, 2007: 183). For example, in the United States the use of the Internet for the purpose of political campaigning was prominently utilized by Jesse Ventura during the 1998 Minnesota gubernatorial elections (Anstead, 2008: 59). Since then, the Internet has come a long way and has developed into a sophisticated communication tool for reaching potential voters, probably most masterfully utilized during the 2007–8 presidential campaign of Barack Obama. Additionally, the Obama campaign did not only illustrate how to mobilize voters but also how to utilize online communication to target potential supporters and voters, to raise massive amounts of money and to integrate the registered supporters of the Obama network into the Democratic Party network.

While the United States is clearly at the forefront in using the Internet in the political arena, in Indonesia the platform IPTEKnet pioneered the use of online communication as a non-commercial provider in the research sector in June 1994 (GIPI, 2003:12). In 1995 the online providers IndoInternet and RADnet began their operations. In the following year the Internet had expanded its presence in the media, commerce and politics sectors. In early 1996 a variety of political organizations within Indonesia started to set up their own mailing lists that functioned as a forum to discuss and share information on protests distributed via e-mail. The use of the Internet became especially prevalent during the events of 1997 and 1998 (Hill et al., 2000: 121). In facilitating information and enhancing communication channels the Internet has played an important role in the events that resulted in the collapse of Suharto’s ‘New Order Government.’ As for 2007, an estimated 25 million people are reported to use the Internet in Indonesia on a regular basis, accounting for 11.36% of the country’s population of 220 million (APJII, 2007; BPS, 2005; see also Table 1).

Table 1. Number of Internet Users in Indonesia since 1998.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population (in millions)</th>
<th>Number of Internet Users</th>
<th>% (Internet Users/Population)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>512,000</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>11,226,143</td>
<td>5.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>(est.) 25,000,000</td>
<td>11.36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data compiled from BPS (Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia (Statistics Indonesia)) (2005) and APJII (2007).

In the wake of the Asian financial crisis of 1997–8 massive public protests essentially undermined 32 years of rule of the Suharto regime, and marked a forceful beginning of a long overdue political reform process. For most observers an institutional reform was an inevitable step. Thus, it was only consequential that the new government of Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie that succeeded Suharto began to lift strict controls on political parties, the press and Indonesia’s citizens who were now able to express their opinions more freely. Meanwhile, Indonesia’s political architecture changed dramatically from authoritarian rule towards a new democratic system (cf. MacIntyre, 2003). This post-Suharto system shall be called ‘democracy 1.0.’ Most importantly, the political reform process that was set in motion enabled the creation of political parties, and resulted in a boom of party-formations after 1999. Thus, from 1977 to 1997 only three parties were eligible for election, but more than forty parties entered the election in 2004 and the most recent election in 2009. As a second important reform measure an election system was adopted and implemented in 1999 under which the president, the members of parliament, governors, as well as the heads of the provinces, regencies and cities are elected directly (KPU, 2009a; see also Table 2). These reforms have fundamentally reconfigured the boundaries of governance in Indonesia through restating the relationship between citizens, politicians and the government.

The rise of new political parties, the emergence of a new free press and the enhanced possibilities for citizens to voice their opinions and to participate in the political process marks a radical break with the Suharto-era. And yet, in a young democracy like Indonesia the political direction of reform remains contested and a political discourse is still an unstable institution. Thus, while direct citizen participation in politics remains limited to elections, their voices need to be integrated in the daily political process in order to enhance the stability of the new democratic system while at the same time making it more responsive to the opinions of its citizens. Thus, it is essential to find mechanisms in Indonesia that accelerate and stabilize the democratic reform process. We argue that ICTs and especially the Internet provide powerful tools for achieving these goals. Furthermore, with regard to elections, we suggest that using ICTs does not simply help us to make a decision to vote for a member of parliament or a president, but ICTs facilitate processes of active participation by citizens, the media, civil society actors, politician and political parties. This, we argue, represents the leitmotif of e-campaigning and constitutes the core of e-democracy.

And yet, this proposition might be overstated given the small proportion of Internet users in Indonesia. Thus, empirical reality turns our claim into normative reasoning. It is certainly the case that the Internet has played an important role in the political processes that resulted in Indonesia’s democratization in 1998 (Hill et al., 2000), but the impact of the Internet on democracy should not be measured by the numbers of its users. In fact, what the Internet can
tell us, however, is how actors seek participation in the process of democracy. Thus, the normative argument which derives from here is that we can expect ICTs to function as one important channel that enhances the interactive process of communication between the private and the public and thus significantly contributes to the process of politics.

This is how we will proceed. In order to explain how ICTs contribute to the process of political democratization in Indonesia, this paper will scrutinize the governance reform that was initiated in 1998 and analyze its political outcomes as they evolved since 1998. In attempting to measure the development of electronic citizen participation, we will focus on the election process and compare the use of ICTs in general elections since 1999. In order to do so, we begin by theoretically explaining how ICTs can be a powerful democratic instrument in the governance process, before we lay out a framework for e-campaigning which we link to the process of governance in general and to e-governance in particular. Second, before we focus on e-campaigning in Indonesia, we will provide a brief overview of the development of ICTs and the process of governance reform in Indonesia, with a focus on the reform initiatives of the political party system after 1998. We will then turn our focus on the role ICTs played in Indonesia in 1998. We will depict our findings against the set of empirical data based on an analysis of websites obtained by political parties in Indonesia during the election of 2009.

Finally, why do we think all this is important? Considering the political history of Indonesia in the 1990s after the collapse of the Suharto regime and the country’s return to democratic governance practices emphasizes the importance of our discussion of the role of ICTs in the political processes in Indonesia, which has not yet finished its journey of democratization. Exploring ways of advancing the political development towards responsible, democratic and responsive policy-making in a young democracy in a time in which information technology plays an ever more important role in politics represents an important academic, but not yet sufficiently studied subject matter. Not only have the political systems of Southeast Asia in general not received the academic attention the political developments in the 1990s deserve, but the role of ICTs in political transformation processes and democratic development represents a widely unexplored question. This study attempts to address this important new field of research through taking a closer look at Indonesia while applying new theoretic insights generated from the discussion of the concepts of e-government, e-governance, and e-democracy and the links that bind them, online and offline.

2. E-Campaigning and Citizen Participation in Elections

2.1 The Internet as a New Communication Channel for Citizen Participation

In this section we will explain the role of ICTs as a powerful instrument for enhancing citizen participation. According to Anttiroiko, conventional notions of citizen participation include voting, campaigning in elections and becoming an active member of a political party (Anttiroiko, 2004: 36). In this regard, we can argue that ICTs provide and facilitate novel ways of political participation for citizens. The most important elements here can be described as follows.

Perhaps the most illustrative example for ICTs as a tool for enhancing citizen participation can be found in the technology of e-mail as well as mailing lists which represent a very attractive tool for delivering messages due to their ability to significantly reduce communication costs, while at the same time increase the speed of information delivery (Graham, 1999: 66). Needless to say, these advantages exist not just for individuals but also serve the purposes of political groups. Political groups utilize e-mails and maintain mailing lists in order to communicate with party members as well as with potential voters. Conceived as such, these forms of communication represent a crucial channel for political participation. Moreover, another important communication channel to consider in this context is the maintenance of websites. Websites provide users with an opportunity to comment on political issues and thus function.
as an important feedback interface between citizens and political parties, or citizens and a given government agency (West, 2005: 3, Graham, 1999: 69). Following West, we point out that it is precisely this character of possessing an interaction capability which transforms websites into an essential element for citizen participation, providing indispensable channels through which to obtain access to information as well as to comment on and discuss political issues (West, 2005: 165). Especially the U.S. has been a pioneer in the development of ICTs and utilized the Internet as well as e-mail technologies in election campaigning. In recent years, new forms of electronic media entered the technological portfolio of campaigners and citizens alike, most prominently blogs, or new social-networking sites such as Meetup, YouTube, Facebook, or Twitter, now commonly known under the notion ‘Web 2.0’ (Kernaghan, 2007: 185).

Blogs are websites comprised of posts which permit readers to directly respond to the web content. As such, blogs represent especially in the U.S. an increasingly influential form of citizen journalism. For example, political blogs are used by individuals or groups to share their views on campaign events, or to seek or maintain political support, and raise money through a large number of donations, illustrated very impressively by the Obama campaign with their online platform ‘My.BarackObama.com’ which continued its operation even today turning the online election campaign into a constant support apparatus for the Obama presidency. Social-networking sites such the 2002 created ‘Meetup.com’ bring together individuals who share common interests and then agree to meet offline (i.e. face to face) in places like coffee shops (Kernaghan, 2007: 186), while other sites such as Facebook facilitate online networking. While both services were used by previous U.S. presidential election campaigns as useful tools to reach out to voters, the online service YouTube was utilized to inexpensively place video ads employing the self-automatic proliferation mechanism of the Internet to spread the campaign message.

2.2 E-Campaigning in Theory and Praxis

Let us now delve deeper into the theoretical aspects of our subject matter and consider how ICTs are employed in campaigns as a vital part of the political governance process. We recall the theoretical notion of governance and the e-governance framework. Elsewhere, one of us has defined governance as the process in which non-state actors (such as NGOs, NPOs and private corporations) are increasingly involved in the traditional functional domains of the state (i.e. the provision of public services and policy-making processes) performed simultaneously at and across the local, the regional, the national, and the global levels of governance (Nurhadryani, forthcoming). Understood in these terms, the notion of governance embraces a broad variety of actor relations at different levels of policy- and decision making, which in turn explains the diversity of governance concepts (eg. local governance, global governance, corporate governance). This paper attempts to explain how political parties, politicians, interest groups and citizen employ ICTs in political processes, especially in elections at the local and national level of governance. Therefore, the framework employed here is e-governance.

The notion of e-governance can be understood as a process through which ICTs are utilized within governance processes in complex organizations and institutions and take place simultaneously across different levels of governance. The use of ICTs particularly refers to the application of the Internet, e-mail, websites, and social-networking applications which are utilized to provide information, to deliver services and to interact with citizens electronically. Furthermore, the application of ICTs can also empower citizens and increase their opportunities for participating in the democratic process of policy- and decision making (Nurhadryani, forthcoming).

In exploring the links between e-governance, e-government, and e-democracy, we argue that the functions of e-governance embrace the notions of e-democracy and e-government and integrate an increased number of non-state actors across different levels of policy-making and public service provision. This, in turn, means that the notion of e-democracy describes the way in which the state utilizes ICTs in order to achieve improvement of the policy-making process through enhancing the level of participation of various actors in the policy- and decision-making processes. E-government refers to the public sector, its institutions, and processes that utilize electronic technologies as tools in the operations of government and the provision of services to and the engagement with the public (Nurhadryani, forthcoming). With regards to campaigning, Holbrook remarks that the primary function of campaigning is to generate information for the purpose of persuasion. The objective of campaigning events is to produce changes in the public opinion by providing the public with information that is relevant to the voting decision and thus the election outcome (Holbrook, 1996: 59). The target of these efforts of persuasion is the voting public. Thus, we can argue that e-campaigning refers to the utilization of ICTs by relevant actors involved in campaigning (i.e. political parties, candidates, citizens, interest groups, mass media etc.) for the purpose of engaging in the formulation of a collective public opinion. It thus can be said that e-campaigning is part of e-democracy and e-governance. In conclusion, we can locate the theoretical notion of e-campaigning at the interface of e-governance, e-democracy, and e-government. This conceptual relationship is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 2 illustrates the interaction between actors that are involved in campaigning and the information processing through the application of ICTs in e-campaigning.

What is illustrated is how in the particular context of campaigning technology is applied as a communicative tool for forming and manipulating public opinion with regard to candidates. ICTs can ultimately play an important role in determining election outcomes. Political parties organize campaign events and create websites or use other Internet
utilities that are intended to influence the voter. Websites maintained and operated by political parties provide information which range from general information about the party platform as well as particular information including current policy-related debates and speeches of the main candidate. Mass media and journalists mediate the message to the voting public. They launch blogs for fostering open discussions; or they create social networks in support for or in opposition to specific issues. These information and communication channels can be used by voters to evaluate their decisions and update their choices with regard to a given set of candidates (Holbrook, 1996:58).

Let us briefly illustrate this framework with reference to current political events in Indonesia. Indonesia in 2004 has begun to recover from the ramifications of the 1997–8 financial crisis and the government of Susilo Bambang Yudoyono and his Democratic Party were trying to fight corruption. Against this background, Yudoyono and his party were widely expected to win the 2009 elections. And yet, the occurrence of widely anticipated ‘events’ such as the fall in the oil price as well as a religious debate surrounding the wife of the vice-president rapidly spread by newly available technology and their communication channels mobilized the public in response to these ‘events’ resulting in a shift of public opinion towards the opposition parties. This, in turn has forced the Democratic Party to launch and feed new issues into the information circle to attack their political opponents.

In short, we argue that communication and information distribution is a fundamental process of e-campaigning that feeds new issues into the debating circles and influences the process of public opinion formation and thus the voting outcome. In this context, the Internet as a crucial communication technology (i.e. e-mail, websites, blogs, and social-network systems) provides a new channel for facilitating interactive communication between actors, and the communication between the public and the political sphere in the larger political process.

Considering the notion of communication, Christiansen explains that communication can be divided into two forms. The first form of communication is the unidirectional flow of information from an internal node to an external one. Thus, unidirectional communication describes a monologue (in contrast to a dialogue). The content of the communication process is determined by the source of information (i.e. parties, interest groups, and media), while the communication process from external nodes to internal nodes only takes place in response to specific requests. And yet, since democracy requires feedback, it is necessary to enforce a multidirectional dialog between parties, candidates and the voting public. The process of shaping the public opinion is related to the interaction of information exchange. This point is illustrated by Andrew’s model that explains the interaction between states and citizens in the age of the Internet. Andrew provides three different models of interaction, which he terms (1) the managerial model, (2) the
consultative model, and (3) the participatory model (Andrew, 2003: 272). Precisely, the managerial model is primarily concerned with the process of efficient information distribution to citizens. In this regard, the Internet is conceived as a tool which could be employed to improve this efficiency while reducing the cost and time of information distribution and thus fundamentally altering the way of how actors interact. And yet, this change does not allow conclusions about whether democracy as such will be enhanced through altering information distribution (ibid.: 276). The consultative model distinguishes itself from the managerial model by focusing on the aspect of how the Internet facilitates the communication of citizen opinion with regard to political parties. Input (i.e. feedback) from the side of the citizens is regarded as an important source for formulating and providing better policies (ibid.: 278). In this sense, the Internet functions as an important source for political parties to survey the public opinion. However, it needs to be emphasized that the consultative model may only allow inputs that fit within the parameters already set by parties, for instance through a determined set of questions in electronic pooling. Finally, the participatory model assumes that a discussion takes place in an existing civil society. Interest groups interact in a process of online deliberation in the course of which they obtain the opportunity to participate in the formation of public opinion. And yet, Andrew reminds us that even in this model, the government remains the dominant actor in the political process (ibid.: 280).

Stepping back from these theoretical notions, we recognize that these three models of interaction are, of course, designed as ideal types. In reality, though, all models may allow for intersection and overlap. Furthermore, it becomes clear from this description that Andrew’s notion of interaction corresponds in large parts to the thoughts put forward in the work of Christiansen who elaborated on the process of communication. Precisely, the managerial model of interaction corresponds with the above outlined notion of unidirectional communication, while the participation model can be related to the dialogue type of communication. Finally, the consultation model represents a transition stage from unidirectional communication to dialogue.

Having elaborated on some of the benefits of the Internet for democracy, the outlined framework of e-campaigning, as well the models of communication and interaction raise the question of how politicians, political parties, interest groups and citizens actually employ the Internet in the process of campaigning. With reference to Coleman (2001) we distinguish between four different types of activities these actors can exercise. The first activity is ‘e-marketing’ by political parties and their candidates. In this case the Internet functions as a market place for information and provides voters with access to information that was not fully accessible during previous elections. These include detailed information concerning policy proposals and election programs, speech transcripts or downloadable audio and video material (e.g. in form of podcasts). Furthermore, party websites cannot only function as market places for information or as merchandise platforms for party-related material, but they also organize and mobilize supporters, which as impressively demonstrated by the online platform operated by the Obama campaign during the years of 2007–8. The second activity could be referred to as ‘e-debating’ (though, not Coleman’s term) 13 and includes the process of exchanging opinions, for example, in online forums. As a third important activity, Coleman mentions the move of some of the traditional media (e.g. newspapers, television broadcasters) to establish online platforms that provide the potential voter with a range of accessible information. These websites offer a variety of perspectives, analyze and survey opinions, and enable the use of archives and the access to information on previous elections. Thus, information is broadly and freely available and not limited to time and place as are most traditional news media. Finally, as a fourth activity Coleman identifies new forms of interactivity facilitated through the Internet that are more inclusive, and represent a participatory style of politics (Coleman, 2001: 680–685). For example, new platforms like Facebook represent a case in point, since users are directly involved as an integrative part of the campaign. Again, this point was well documented in the Obama campaign.

In conclusion of these theoretical considerations, we argue that the notion of e-campaigning refers to the process of how politicians, political parties, interest groups, and the electorate as well as other actors such as the media utilize ICTs in the process of campaigning in order to generate and provide information across the different levels of governance. ICTs provide information as a source for evaluating voting preferences and facilitate a two-way communication for enhancing citizen participation and influence the outcome of an election. Consequently, this election outcome would then be more representative.

3. Indonesia and the Role of ICTs in the Process of Governance Reforms since 1998

The way in which e-campaigning is carried out differs from country to country, not only due to the differing legal conditions that regulate the employment of ICTs in election times, and the overall differences in the political systems, but also because of different socio-economic development levels, i.e. the spread of ICT infrastructure, education generating knowledge of how to facilitate the use of ICTs, and the income levels to purchase ICTs. Therefore, we conceive it as inevitable to engage in a discussion of ICTs development in relationship to the development of the political party system in Indonesia, before we focus our attention on the subject matter of e-campaigning in the concrete context of Indonesian politics. The crucial watershed in the political development can be located in the year 1998, when substantial reform efforts were undertaken in Indonesia that laid the groundwork for the implementation of e-governance schemes in this country.
3.1 A Brief Overview of the Development of ICTs and Internet Usage in Indonesia

As we have already mentioned in the introductory section of this paper, the Internet began to be used in Indonesia in June 1994 as the non-commercial provider IPTEKnet that offered the service for the research sector. In the following year the Internet service providers IndoInternet and RADnet started their operation by offering the Internet to the general public (GIPI, 2003: 12; Hill et al., 2000: 120). As for 2007 an estimated 25 million people were reported to use the Internet, accounting for only 11.36% of Indonesia’s population (see Table 1). These numbers are low, even in an overall Asian comparison.

The Internet developed in Indonesia when IPTEKnet provided access to academic staff at major universities, from where a spillover into the private sector took place that initiated a spread of the Internet in the metropolitan areas of Java.

According to Purbo, the majority of Indonesia’s Internet users is between 25–35 years old and well educated, among them high school graduates, university students and young professionals (Purbo, 2005). According to a study of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) a large percentage of users access the Internet from Internet cafés (43%) and offices (41%), while only a small percentage access the Internet from their private houses (12%), schools and universities (4%) (ITU, 2002). This user profile highlights the insufficient ICT infrastructure in private households as well as in the education sector. Furthermore, while half of Indonesia’s Internet cafés are located in Jakarta, approximately 87% are concentrated in Java (APJII, 2007) with more than 86% of the country’s telecommunications infrastructure located in the western part of Indonesia (i.e. Java, Sumatra, and Bali) (GIPI, 2006) (See Figure 3). A 2001 survey conducted by the Indonesia Internet Service Provider Association (APJII [Asosiasi Penyelengara Jasa Internet Indonesia]) in cooperation with the Indonesia Business Community and Accenture showed that the majority of Internet users in Indonesia use the technology primarily for e-mail (79%), entertainment (62%), Internet surfing (52%), and business (44%), while the minority uses the technology for academic research (19%), business research (8%), shopping (5%) or other purposes (16%).

3.2 Online Pressure and the Collapse of the Suharto Regime: ICTs and Indonesia’s Political Turn in 1998

During the rise of the Internet in Indonesia in 1996 the online forum Apakabar (‘How is life?’) was an important platform for discussing the political reform of the Suharto regime. This forum provided a platform for active citizens and enabled them to work against the Suharto regime. During the time of the Suharto regime, Indonesia was in large parts an authoritarian political system which put its citizens and media under strict control. However, behind the veil of the socio-political oppression of the Internet evolved into a vital space for active discussion in which citizens could participate in formulating a collective public opinion. The Asian financial and economic crisis which erupted in 1997 first in Thailand before it hit Indonesia resulted in public disbelief and anger lifting up the opposition to the level where it could actually challenge Suharto. Before, in early 1996 a variety of political organizations within Indonesia started to set up their own mailing lists that functioned as a forum to discuss and to share information about protests distributed via e-mail in the events of 1997 and 1998. Many news media and chat groups revealed and discussed stories accusing the regime of Suharto of severe corruption, collusion and nepotism. In doing so, the Internet clearly facilitated and enhanced the political dynamics and the public outrage against the regime. At the end of 1998, when the Suharto regime crumbled and finally collapsed, the Internet did not only cover the events but functioned as an essential
facilitator and catalyst of these events. Thus, the events of 1997–8 suggest that although Indonesia had only a limited infrastructure ICT (0.2% of the population were linked to the Internet in 1998, see Table 1), the employment of ICTs (here esp. the use of short-messaging and e-mailing) did contribute to the dynamics which resulted in the democratization through facilitating the voices of civil societal interest groups struggling for democratic political reform in Indonesia (Hill et al., 2000: 119–133).

3.3 The Political Reform Process after 1998

In the following we will provide a brief history of the reform process of the political party and election system in the aftermath of the collapse of the Suharto regime. After 1998, the control over the country’s political parties was lifted and the legal conditions for establishing new parties were relaxed. Thus, while only three parties were allowed under Suharto’s ‘New Order,’ the collapse of the regime in 1998 lead to the establishment of more than 100 new parties, many of which possessed only a very limited support base (Reilly, 2007: 49). The situation which emerged was that of post-authoritarian Indonesia resembling ‘Weimar Republic’ Germany with a party system too fragmented with too many parties to ensure an efficiently functioning democracy. Therefore, the need for Indonesia to reform its political system was more than imminent. In reforming the political system in 1999 two major developments unfolded which set Indonesia on the fast track of democratization.

The first major change was the reform of the political party system in 1999. While the system was remodeled and reduced the number of parties significantly, it nonetheless encouraged the formation of a large number of new parties. Thus, after 1999 more than forty parties participated in the first post-Suharto general election campaigning in a multi-party system for seats in the parliament (i.e. the Peoples Representative Council) under a system of proportional representation with a two-percent threshold for mandates to enter the parliament. Meanwhile, in this year’s general election held in April, 44 parties registered to enter the race indicating a relative stabilization of the party system given Indonesia’s large population and multifaceted socio-cultural and religious background. The rise of a competitive political party system in Indonesia (see Table 2) marks a significant change in the political system providing its citizen more opportunities to participate in political activities in what is today a vital pluralistic political landscape. The historical experiences show that Indonesia has twice been a multi-party system, once in the 1950s and again since the 1998s (see Table 2).

With the April 5, 2009 national parliamentary elections, a new system was implemented comprising party lists which featured the candidates’ names on newspaper size ballots. Overall 44 national and regional parties campaigned for 550 mandates while each party supported in average more than three individual candidates. Thus, for example, the ballot for the election district of Jakarta featured a total number of 195 individual candidates. In total, the number of candidates who competed in the 2009 elections was 11.219 candidates and some 32.263 candidates competed for regional mandates (see Table 2). In addition, more than 33 candidates competed for posts of the governor, and 348 candidates for mandates in local government elections. Thus, 2009 was a remarkably busy year in Indonesian politics recording the highest costs for elections ever. And yet, this new system is far too complex and too difficult for common voters to choose, because given the number of candidates, voters lack sufficient information about many candidates. This new electoral system was adopted and implemented in 2004 under which the president, provincial governors, and the heads of regencies and cities heads are elected directly while turning the legislative into a bicameral system, with the Regional Representative Council (the Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, DPR) functioning as the second chamber next to the People’s Representative Council (MPR).

This new political system made Indonesia’s electoral arrangements more advantageous to large parties than was previously the case. Parties are now in need of well orchestrated campaigning strategies and professional platforms to succeed in elections and to fulfill their legislative obligations. This becomes even more of a challenging task if we consider that parties operate in a geographical environment where voters are scattered over a territory which comprises more than 13.000 islands, 33 provinces and over 348 local governments. In addition, under the new system, each party had to establish branches in at least one-third of Indonesia’s 33 provinces as well as in more than half of the regencies and cities municipalities within those provinces (Law No. 22, 1999). This, in turn has made it very difficult and expensive for small parties to survive and eventually succeed in national elections. Against this background, it becomes indispensable for parties to seek new effective instruments to communicate with voters and to mobilize citizens for political participation and organization in a country as diverse as Indonesia.

In sum, given the huge number of parties and candidates in addition to the complex election mechanism it appears to be a comprehensible move to argue for the introduction of new measures to provide and facilitate the access to information on political parties and their candidates in election times as well as the political system in general to the 171 million Indonesian voters (KPU, 2009e). Moreover, Indonesia is still in a transition to a mature democracy, thus memories of corrupt politicians and rigged elections are fresh, enforcing the will of the citizens and the free media to pay careful attention to political campaigns while at the same time demanding channels of expressing their views and gaining information. Therefore, trustful information about what the government, as well as parties and their candidates do or are planning to do in post-election times need to be communicated. It is here that we come back to our subject matter of the relationship between ICTs and e-campaigning, or to speak more broadly, between political reform and e-governance. It is the new information technology which enables the distribution of information and integrates citizens
3.4 The Development of E-Campaigning in Indonesia after 1998

Let us now turn to the role of e-campaigning in the political process of Indonesia. In post-Suharto Indonesia three democratic elections were held in 1999, 2004 and most recently in 2009. However, only 9 of the 48 parties that participated in the 1999 elections maintained websites (Hill et al., 2000: 131), and only a few more did so in 2004. This, we argue, indicates that Indonesia was comparatively slow in utilizing the Internet (see note vii). In this respect, the 2009 election can be labeled as ‘the first Internet election’ Indonesia as witnessed, even though only a minority of the Indonesian public currently has access to the Internet (11.3% in 2007, see Table 1). We will now explore in more detail how the Internet was used by political parties, candidates, the media (newspapers, television), and citizens as a tool for spreading and gaining information, and for mobilizing the votes in the 2009 Indonesia elections.

We will do so by assessing all of the 44 parties that participated in Indonesia’s 2009 election based on the fact of whether they maintained Internet platforms or not. We will then focus on the websites of the ‘big nine’ parties that dominated the 2009 election landscape in number of candidates and media presence (see Table 3). We will provide empirical data collected through accessing these websites during the pre-election phase between February 2009 and April 2009. In order to evaluate the function of the websites we have employed the parameters shown in Table 4 (see also Nurhadryani, forthcoming). These parameters help us to evaluate the extent the website in question can be used for advertising their potential supporters and voters. Some websites invited their visitors to send in questions and comments via email, but few were actually answered. A closer analysis of the functions and responsiveness of the ‘big nine’ party’s websites along the lines of our indicators is shown in Table 4. The data shows that the informing function for these websites provided by 46%, indicating, that a small majority of the parties surveyed are using ICTs for advertising their platforms. In addition, only 33% (or three parties) maintained a website which provided communication functions, while the majority of the nine parties typically run platforms in correspondence to our above described category of the unidirectional communication model.

We will now turn our attention to the media in the campaigning process. Indeed, very few voters experienced the campaign through online contact with a political party website. Instead, most voters obtained their information through print news or television rather than through the Internet. Despite this fact, some print and television news providers extended their services through online services and provided special online space for election coverage. The most impressive efforts in this regard were made by established print news platforms such as Media Indonesia, Suara Pembaharuan, Seputar Indonesia, Pikiran Rakyat, and the TV broadcaster SCTV. Much of the news that these services provided in their conventional formats were also available live or recorded on their Internet platforms. For instance, in this year’s elections, it is the first time ever for a presidential candidate to participate in a public and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name of Party</th>
<th>Party Homepage</th>
<th>Election Result (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Partai Demokrat</td>
<td><a href="http://www.demokrat.or.id">www.demokrat.or.id</a></td>
<td>20.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Partai Golongan karya</td>
<td><a href="http://www.golkar.or.id">www.golkar.or.id</a></td>
<td>14.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan</td>
<td><a href="http://www.pdi-perjuangan.or.id">www.pdi-perjuangan.or.id</a></td>
<td>14.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Partai Keadilan Sejahtera</td>
<td><a href="http://www.pk-sejahtera.org">www.pk-sejahtera.org</a></td>
<td>7.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Partai Amanat National</td>
<td><a href="http://www.pan.or.id">www.pan.or.id</a></td>
<td>6.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Partai Persatuan Pembangunan</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ppp.or.id">www.ppp.or.id</a></td>
<td>5.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Partai kebangkitan Bangsa</td>
<td><a href="http://www.dpp-pkb.org">www.dpp-pkb.org</a></td>
<td>4.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Partai Gerakan Indonesia Raya</td>
<td><a href="http://www.partaigerindra.or.id">www.partaigerindra.or.id</a></td>
<td>4.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Partai Hati Nurani Rakyat</td>
<td><a href="http://www.hanura.com">www.hanura.com</a></td>
<td>3.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: General Election Commission (KPU, 2009e).
televised live debate. This move was widely anticipated by citizens who not only watched this event on TV, but the debate video was also uploaded on YouTube on the same day, while only two hours after the end of the debate its content was lively debated on the Internet platforms of Indonesia’s newspapers, suggesting an increased responsiveness from the side of the media to such political events. Online news platforms proved to be faster in polling and analysing public opinion.

With regard to candidates it is difficult to estimate how many of them actually used ICTs in the course of their campaign. Some candidates have created personal profiles or individual websites through using the platform of their party websites, while others have created blogs. But in general, only a small number of candidates have obtained websites thus far, which indicates that little opportunity exists to engage in active consultation with candidates. Moreover, others like Boediono, who is a candidate for the post of the vice presidency from Democratic Party recognized the need for an Internet presence only about a month before the election and rushed to set up a blog. Thus, what is true for the governance system in general, proved also to be the case for candidates as well, namely that they have been largely reluctant in embracing the possibility of the Internet for their campaigns.

Finally, we focus on new electronic media forms such as blogs and the social-networking site Facebook, which obtained some importance in the process of campaigning and represent the main characteristic of what is known under the notion of ‘Web 2.0.’ The most popular blogs are thus run by the news service Kompas online. Kompas is one of the leading newspapers in Indonesia, and has encouraged its journalists as well as the general public to create blogs and thus to facilitate a form of citizen journalism. The result is a blog entitled ‘kompasiana: Journalist blog network,’ and provides citizens with updated information on current political issues. Moreover, in this journalist blog network some of the political candidates, like the presidential candidate Jussup Kalla (Golkar Party) or the Gerindra Party Candidate for the vice-presidency, Prabowo Subianto, have engaged in an online discussion on this platform in order to promote their views.

Needless to say, the Internet bears both positive and negative aspects for candidates in election times. For example, in April 2009, the social-networking service Facebook stipulated a large controversy in Indonesia in featuring a site attacking one of the prominent presidential candidates, Megawati. Facebook featured a group entitled ‘anti-megawati’ (‘Say no to Megawati’). In only six days this Facebook entry registered 97,177 visits of ‘Say no to Megawati’ supporters, criticizing her on the basis of her presidency during 2001–2004. This issue remained not only a debate in the online world but soon spilled over into the offline realm of politics affecting the stance of Megawati in public opinion.

In short, we have seen that the Internet is on the rise as a tool for campaigning and information distribution in the context of elections, yet its trajectory is moderate rather than rapid. Television and print media remain the dominant news sources for most Indonesians, who have only recently begun to go online. In response to these first positive developments, an increasing number of traditional news providers made their contents available online facilitating information channels and thus the process of public opinion formation. A dialogue between citizens, political parties and candidates is potentially intensified through new technologies such e-mails, mailing-lists, websites, and new electronic media forms such as blogs and other social-networking systems. Indeed, ICTs have provided Indonesians with more channels to access information or gain a broader variety of opinions on current issues which affect their daily lives. It is here that e-campaigning provides vital information to voters to make informed decisions.
4. Conclusion

What have we learned? Indonesians have been slow to utilize the powers of the web but they are beginning to catch up. This research was undertaken in the context of the 2009 elections and discovered that Indonesia’s political party websites contain only very limited opportunities for dialogue between citizens and the parties/candidates. Despite encouraging signs, the overall findings suggest that most parties have been slow to embrace the concept of e-governance and to adopt strategies of e-campaigning. In fact, only one third of the most influential parties embraced the potential of the Internet in providing communicative online platforms. However, the Internet has played an increasingly important role in the 2009 elections and continues to do so as the presidential election take place in July 2009. This development has been largely stimulated by the choice of the media to actively embrace the use of ICTs. In doing so, the media has made information on political issues easily and widely available and has thus generated a better informed public and a higher degree of political deliberation among citizens. As voters absorb this information, they become more aware of the choices available to them. We believe that most of the political dialogue in Indonesia is still taking place offline, with most of the mediation between citizens and politicians/parties provided by television and the press. We divide the reform process in Indonesia into two phases, the first phase being the year 1998 in Indonesia that marked the reform process in the immediate aftermath of the Suharto-collapse, and the second phase marking the period of political reform from 1999 until 2009. It becomes clear that ICTs have played an important yet inferior role in the overall transition process, allowing for more development and functional space to be filled in the young democracy, or what we term ‘democracy 1.0’ after the collapse of the Suharto-regime.

Thus, in conclusion we suggest that e-campaigning in Indonesia has not facilitated interaction between parties and voters and had largely remained a unidirectional tool employed for political marketing, with web presences more likely to be managerial rather than consultative or participatory interactive. The Internet, as a medium for facilitating communication has yet to live up to this later normative claim, at least in what has been observed by the authors of this study with respect to the online world of politics already in its next — ‘Web 2.0’ — generation.

Acknowledgment

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Notes

1 The official site of this research service is available under http://www.iptek.net.id/ind/, retrieved June 2, 2009.
4 A noteworthy exception here is the work of MacIntyre (2003).
5 Prominent examples of influential political blogs in the U.S. include Steve Clemons’ The Washington Note (http://www.thewashingtonnote.com) as well as Joshua Micah Marshall’s Talking Points Memo (http://www.talkingpointsmemo.com).
6 For a detailed treatment of the notion of ‘e-debating’ see the contribution of Remenyi and Wilson (2007).
7 As for 2008, the statistics recorded a rate of 10.5% (pop. 237 mill.). As for countries the statistics read for 2008: Japan 73.8% (127 mill.), Malaysia 62.8% (25 mill.), China 22.4% (1.330 mill.), South Korea 76.1% (48 mill), and India 7.1% (1.147 mill.), see the Internet World Stats Projects, retrieved June 3, 2009, from http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats3.htm#asia.
8 For recent and very detailed analysis of transition process of Indonesia’s political system see also Boudreau (2009).
9 More precisely, while 38 parties campaigned throughout the country 6 parties campaigned exclusively at the local level in the province of Aceh. The 44 parties were contesting for 550 seats in the Peoples Representative Council (the Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat, or MPR).
10 These were the established ‘big seven’ from the 2004 election plus two new parties which covered large portions of the popular vote, see Table 3.
11 The parameters we apply here are adapted from Marcella et al. (2004) who studied the use of Internet by candidates in the Scottish parliament elections in 2003.
13 The debate is available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_HegYonUs (retrieved, June 23, 2009).
REFERENCES


