Commentary

Friend or Foe: Internet to Indigenous People in Indonesia

Lesson Learned from Inner Baduy Request for Internet Blackout

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"*The existence of phones/smartphones that can be owned by everyone, including Baduy people, is considered to result in declining morals of our generation that can access non-educating applications and contents*."

The above-mentioned declaration was written in a letter by a member of the Baduy Dalam tribe. This indigenous community deliberately avoids using money, modern advancements, and formal schooling, thereby preventing tourists from documenting their unique existence. The letter was initially directed to the Lebak Official and later forwarded to the Ministry of Communication and Informatics, bearing the date of June 2023 (Syakriah, 2023).

"*This request is a part of our efforts to minimize the negative impact of smartphones on our people*."

Additionally, the assertion above is from a representative from the Baduy community, who argued that the presence of telecommunication towers nearby could pose a threat to their traditional way of life and the inclination of the younger generation towards internet usage (AFP, 2023) In light of this request,

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the Ministry of Communication and Informatics has officially granted the Inner Baduy's appeal to cease internet services. The Inner Baduy community firmly believes that the internet has a detrimental impact on the younger generation. As a result, they have implemented measures to protect their community from the influence of the online world (Loasana, 2023).

The Baduy community, frequently associated with the Sunda Kingdom or Padjajaran Kingdom in the 15th and 16th centuries, is divided into Outer Baduy and Inner Baduy. While Outer Baduy embraces modernity, they also maintain the principles and teachings of the Baduy. Conversely, Inner Baduy remains resolute in preserving its genuine culture, free from external influences. They prioritize the traditions of their forefathers and actively work towards safeguarding them, as well as the natural environment surrounding them. (Amaliyah, 2018) On July 6th, 2020, the Baduy community made an official appeal to the President of the Republic of Indonesia, urging for the exclusion of their village from the roster of tourist attractions. Instead, they put forth a suggestion to include the esteemed Saba Budaya Baduy. This endeavor emphasized sustainable tourism approaches, intending to limit the number of visitors to the village. The primary objective of the Baduy community was to uphold a harmonious equilibrium between preserving their cultural legacy and protecting their pristine natural environment. (Abidin, 2020) Baduy received the prestigious 2022 Indonesia Tourism Village Award for outstanding performance, securing a place among the top 50 Best Villages. (Malikh, 2022) Due to its unwavering commitment to traditional values, the Baduy community has exhibited exceptional cultural and economic resilience amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite being a community of approximately 26,000 people, the Baduy economy has remained unaffected by the current crisis. The tribe places great importance on its value: a mountain should not be destroyed, a valley should not be damaged, and a prohibition should not be violated (Amalia, et al., 2023).

Baduy Dalam is undeniably recognized as one of the indigenous peoples of Indonesia. Even though the interpretation of the term "indigenous people" is a matter of contention and can occasionally be construed in various ways. Convention No. 169, also known as the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention of 1989, has been implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) to provide explicit guidelines for identifying indigenous and tribal communities. (International Labour Organziation (ILO), n.d.) The concept of the rights of indigenous peoples is universally recognized in global legal norms, irrespective of the terminology employed at the national level to define them. These individuals are entitled to a comprehensive range of rights that aim to address and rectify discriminatory practices that impact them. In the case of Indonesia, the term "*masyarakat adat*" is frequently used to refer to native communities, which comprise more than 700 ethnic groups and around 20-29% of the country's population. (Errico, 2017) Amnesty International has documented that the worldwide population of Indigenous individuals surpasses 476 million, inhabiting more than 90 countries across the globe. (Amnesty International, 2023) Around two-thirds of the worldwide indigenous population is located in the Asian continent (World Bank, 2011). On September 13, 2007, the international community pledged to endorse a resolution known as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This declaration recognizes that indigenous individuals are entitled to the same rights and privileges as any other individuals while also emphasizing the importance of respecting and embracing the diversity of all people. Moreover, the United Nations firmly asserts that when indigenous peoples have authority over decisions that affect them and their lands, territories, and resources, they are better equipped to safeguard and strengthen their institutions, cultures, and traditions. This empowerment enables indigenous communities to develop in alignment with their aspirations and needs (General Assembly, 2007).

Like many other countries, Indonesia has made significant efforts to integrate indigenous communities into the world of technology and development. A recent research study has explored the cultural dynamics between the adat community and modernity, highlighting the crucial role of government support for both aspects. Adat villages, such as Inner Baduy, have transformed into popular tourist destinations but have encountered difficulties adjusting to the market-driven economy and embracing modernization. Economic progress and the influence of external customs from beyond their community have instigated this cultural shift. (Fadli, Cahyandari, Liemanto, Sholehudin, & Hadiyantina, 2023) Indonesia has also emerged as one of the rapidly growing digital economies in the region. However, it grapples with a significant digital divide between urban and rural areas and among different socio-economic groups. To narrow this divide and guarantee a more inclusive future for every Indonesian citizen, the government has taken various steps to improve digital connectivity and accessibility to a wide

range of digital technologies and services. These measures include creating a national broadband plan to ensure that high-speed internet is available to all individuals by 2024. The Palapa Ring project is also being expanded to enhance digital connectivity further. The government has also established community-based internet networks in rural areas, as demonstrated by the "*Digital Village*" program. Furthermore, efforts are being made to promote digital literacy and skills among the population while also improving public service delivery and citizen engagement through digital platforms.

In result, the digital landscape in Indonesia has experienced remarkable growth in recent years. From 2015 to 2022, the number of internet users actively participating online has tripled. Additionally, there has been a consistent increase in active social media accounts, which has risen from 72 million in 2015 to 191.4 million in 2022. The table below illustrates the continuous expansion of Indonesia's digital realm during this period.

Table 1: Sum up of Indonesia's Digital Landscape Overview from 2015 – 2022
(Data released in January of the respected year, in millions)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total Population	255.5	259.1	262	265.4	268.2	272.1	274.9	277.7
Active Internet User	72.7	88.1	132.7	132.7	150	175.4	202.6	204.7
Active Social Media Accounts	72	79.0	106	130	150	160	170	191.4
Mobile Connections	308.2	326.3	371.4	177.9	355.5	338.2	345.3	370.1

Source: Reports from Digital Indonesia: The Essential Guide to the Latest Connected Behaviors, We Are Social, Kepios, from 2015 – 2022.

The data presented in the table highlights the continuous growth of Indonesia's digital ecosystem. This is evident when comparing the number of mobile connections to the total population, with the former surpassing the latter. Although the data does not provide insights into the gap between individuals with and without mobile connections, the increasing number still carries significance. In the IMD World Digital Competitiveness (WDC) assessment, Indonesia is 53rd out of 64 countries. The WDC evaluates and ranks countries based on their adoption and utilization of digital technologies, which can bring about significant changes in government practices, business models, and society. The accompanying figure further supports this information (The IMD World Digital Competitiveness Center 2021).
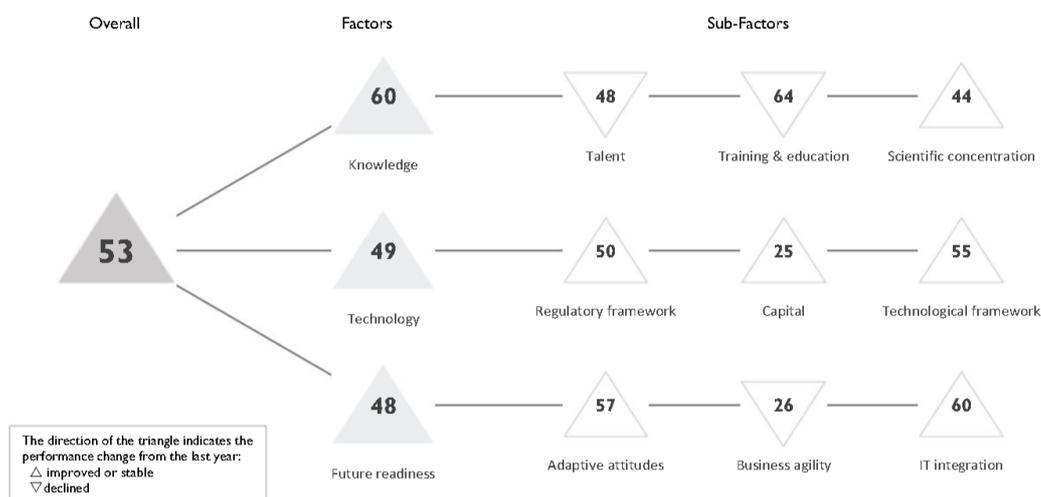

Figure 1. Indonesia's Overall Performance on World Digital Competitiveness Ranking from 64 countries (The IMD World Competitiveness Center, 2021)

Indonesia has witnessed a remarkable and noteworthy advancement in its digital landscape during the pandemic period from 2020 to 2021. The outcomes have consistently shown significant progress. The unexpected catalyst for this accelerated digital transformation in Indonesia has been the COVID-19 pandemic. In recent years, Indonesia has actively nurtured innovation, inclusivity, and efficiency in the realm of technology development.

OVERALL & FACTORS - 5 years	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
OVERALL	59	62	56	56	53
Knowledge	58	61	56	63	60
Technology	56	59	47	54	49
Future readiness	62	62	58	48	48

Figure 2. Indonesia Overall and Factors Ranking Year by Year from 2017 - 2021 on World Digital Competitiveness Ranking from 64 countries (The IMD World Competitiveness Center, 2021)

The Ministry of Communication and Informatics in Indonesia has underscored that the progress of ICT infrastructure in the nation has been hastened by at least a decade compared to the initial timeline. This expeditious development can be attributed to the swift population expansion and the obstacles presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, every sector of the country has been compelled to adjust and advance to address the pandemic effectively. As a result, the ministry's budget reallocation and refocusing policy has been greatly influenced by the pandemic's impact on numerous plans and programs (Ministry of Communication and Informatics of the Republic of Indonesia, 2020).

In 2022, Indonesia achieved a significant milestone by assuming the Presidency of the G20, adopting the motto 'recover together, recover stronger.' Due to its substantial population and economy, Indonesia has been bestowed the privilege of being the sole representative country for Southeast Asia in the G20 since 1999 (Salim, 2010). Digital Economy Transformation is one of the three critical issues chosen by the forum. The ongoing discussions surrounding Covid-19 and digital transformation have been intense. It is widely acknowledged that effectively dealing with economic and health crises necessitates embracing rapid technological advancements. Interestingly, this pandemic has played a pivotal role in compelling the government of Indonesia to take significant strides towards enhancing its digital transformation endeavors. This includes advocating for the inclusion of this agenda on the G20 platform.

The G20 has had a notable impact on the formation of global governance, particularly on advancing development and economic strategies that strive to enhance the well-being of individuals worldwide. Comprising 19 prominent nations and the European Union, the G20 serves as a platform for multilateral cooperation, encompassing countries ranging from middle-income to high-income economies. The composition of the G20 reflects the evolving dynamics of global economic power, with its members collectively accounting for over 80% of the global financial income. Consequently, the economic state of these 20 nations significantly influences the global economy as a whole (Hermawan, Sriyuliani, Hardjowijono, & Tanaga, 2011). The G20 is dedicated to harmonizing its endeavors with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to guarantee that everyone is included in the efforts to eliminate poverty, attain sustainable development, and construct an all-encompassing and sustainable future for everyone. These endeavors will be carried out through multilateral and unilateral domestic and international actions, utilizing the G20's comparative advantage as a global economic forum. (G20 Official, 2016) During the Hangzhou summit in 2016, the G20 expressed its political dedication to assume a leading role in attaining sustainable global development and supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This commitment was solidified by adopting the G20 Action Plan on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The sectors outlined in this plan, known as the Sustainable Development Sectors, are intricately connected to the well-being of individuals, the preservation of our planet, the promotion of prosperity, and the cultivation of peace and partnership. These sectors are also referred to as the 2030 Agenda's 5Ps (G20 Official, 2017). The G20 countries have made concrete endeavors to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These efforts have been evaluated, and it has been revealed that the G20 countries that submitted Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) from 2016 to 2018 have reported significant progress. Nevertheless, critics have raised concerns regarding the inadequate reporting of SDG-related policies and budgets (Elder & Bartalini, 2019). The government has consistently prioritized the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the foundation of all development initiatives in Indonesia's global framework.

The principle of not leaving anyone behind is a fundamental aspect of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aim to eradicate poverty, safeguard the environment, and promote peace and prosperity for all by 2030. We must uphold this principle while developing our nation, as it is ethically

correct and strategically advantageous. Ensuring that all individuals have access to essential services, opportunities, and human rights is the government's duty to establish a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable society capable of addressing the challenges of the 21st century.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the principle of leaving no one behind does not imply neglecting the indigenous people's need to preserve their culture. While granting the request to disconnect from the internet may seem contradictory to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) values, it shows respect for the tribe's way of life. In today's modern society, the internet is widely considered an essential tool, prompting some to question why certain tribes choose to live without it. Nevertheless, it is important to understand that not all tribes residing in remote areas share the same perspective. These tribes have unique cultures and traditions, shaping their values and priorities. Consequently, the internet is not seen as a necessity by these tribes but rather as a potential distraction. They have alternative means of communication, learning, work, and entertainment with greater significance and fulfillment. Their deep connection with nature, community, and ancestors outweighs any desire for online connectivity. Embracing the internet would mean risking the erosion of their distinct identity and way of life, which they are unwilling to compromise. These tribes find contentment and happiness in their current circumstances without feeling compelled to adopt the Internet. The government should address the digital divide by employing socio-cultural approaches. It is crucial to ensure that each person reaps the advantages of technological advancements while also being protected from any negative repercussions they may bring.

While the Baduy community has the potential to bring numerous benefits to the tourism industry, it is important to acknowledge that it may also have detrimental effects on the indigenous people. Tourism is an industry that generates significant economic advantages for various destinations. The intrusion of tourism in such cases can disrupt the tribe's way of life and traditions by causing a lack of respect for their customs, beliefs, and privacy. These actions include taking unauthorized photographs or videos, touching or removing sacred objects, or interfering with important rituals and ceremonies. Additionally, tourism can jeopardize the very survival and independence of these tribes. The presence of tourists may attract the attention of other outsiders who may exploit the tribe's land, resources, or cultural heritage. Moreover, tourists may pressure the tribe to conform to mainstream societal norms or abandon their traditional lifestyle and culture. This can lead to the erosion of the tribe's identity and autonomy, ultimately threatening their long-term existence. Ideally, it may be more appropriate to leave these tribes undisturbed and preserve their unique way of life.

Tribe rights play a significant role in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as they are crucial in reducing inequality and advancing the SDGs. These rights encompass the collective human rights of indigenous peoples, protecting important aspects such as their cultural identity, self-governance, control over their lands and natural resources, and meaningful participation in decision-making processes. International instruments, including the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, recognize and safeguard these rights. However, effective implementation of tribe rights at national and local levels still faces numerous challenges and gaps. These barriers include a lack of political commitment, inadequate legal recognition, insufficient data and indicators, limited consultation and consent mechanisms, and limited access to justice and remedies. As a result, indigenous peoples cannot fully exercise their rights and contribute to achieving the SDGs. To address this, it is crucial to involve indigenous peoples in designing, monitoring, and evaluating the SDGs, considering their specific needs and priorities when formulating indicators and targets. The recent decision by the Indonesian government to grant the request of the indigenous Baduy Dalam community to disconnect themselves from the internet is an example of commitment and respect towards indigenous peoples. Additionally, providing indigenous communities with the necessary resources and support for capacity-building is vital in enabling them to realize their rights and pursue their development aspirations.

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