# IT'S YOUR TURN, OFFICER!:
## THE INP'S NEW VISIBILITY THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA
## (CASE STUDY OF EVANS' BRIMOB FACEBOOK STATUS)

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## ABSTRACT

*History has proved that police have always had opposing view regarding sharing and disseminating information to the public, especially when their state of reputation, legitimacy and accountability are taken into account. Undoubtedly, media have always played important parts in the hurdle. The presence of media is inseparable with police institution, including the current media technologies, social media. The same condition also applies to The Indonesian National Police (INP) with the case of Evans BRIMOB Facebook's status. The case is believed to present a new type of visibility to the INP's institution. Utilizing documentary analysis as well as literature review as main methods in studying the case, this article aims to identify on how the case alter of the INP's visibility and Facebook's contribution during the process. Using the new visibility consept offered by Thompson, it is found that, Evans's status had raised the INP's visibility by exposing the exemplary of its member improper manner. Meanwhile, Facebook has lifted the INP's visibility by facilitating greater exposure over the INP's inadvertent performance. In conclusion, the case has alter not only the INP's visibility to its public but also reinforce the institution to adopt Facebook as one of its information sharing platforms.*

*Kata kunci: Indonesian National Police, new visibility, social media.*

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## BACKGROUND

History has proved that police have always had opposing view regarding sharing and disseminating information to the public. In one side, it is important to the police to be visible which believed by Goldsmith (2010, p. 914) as "a critical component" of the institution that "determine public reactions to the police". They are also required to be transparent as defined by Mawby (1999, p. 264) as "openness to explain how their organization works, a willingness to undergo independent examination, to explain their structure and decision making process, to allow public knowledge of complaints and their investigation". Take the 1990's Rodney King beating case in Los Angeles, the Amado Diallo and Abner Louima cases in New York as examples of how the police institution

received great pressure to be more transparent (Corrigan, 1994; Forst, 2008; Goldsmith, 2010).

On the other hand, the need of visibility and transparency has also presents substantial hurdles for any law enforcement institutions, especially when their state of reputation, legitimacy and accountability are taken into account (Cooke & Sturges, 2009; R. V. Ericson, 1989; Lee & McGovern, 2012; Thompson, 2011). Tester (1994, as cited in Goldsmith, 2010, p. 915) especially noted that the police's visibility, especially the uncontrolled one, may "diminishes their power". In addition, it may also decrease their "account ability" (R. Ericson, 1995). In short, the necessity of openness and visibility for the police has always brought multifaceted quandaries for the institution.

Undoubtedly, media have always played important parts in the hurdle. This condition may occur since media are often being acknowledged as the social control agents which, more often than not, have "forced" the police to incorporate them as "part of the policing apparatus" (R. V. Ericson, 1989, p. 208). As the result, it becomes a common scene to see journalists, reporters or any other media workers within the police buildings. Following that, social media such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter are placed amongst media that are being actively involved with police institution for the past few years (Thompson, 2011). At present, there are increasing number of police institutions which are embracing this medium of "direct citizen participation" in their social and cultural practices (Hoffmann & Kornweitz, 2011).

For example, having recognized the growing trend of social media usage among the society, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) even launched its own Center for Social Media in October 2010. Cooperated with the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, IACP Center for Social Media serves as "a clearinghouse of information and no-cost resources to help law enforcement personnel to develop or enhance their agency's use of social media and integrate Web 2.0 tools into agency operations" (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2010). (Papadopolous, 2009). Hence, the presence of media is inseparable with police institution, including the current media technologies, social media.

Consequently, this inseparability has brought notable discussion in the police institution and social media as both sides interact with and affect each other. One of notable issues is that the social media has capability of bringing what Thompson (2005) calls the "new visibility" to the police institution. Mainly influenced by the medium theory of Joshua Meyrowitz (1985), Thompson identifies new visibility as a situation where "vision is no longer constrained by the spatial and temporal properties"(p. 35). In other words, new social media have weakened the boundaries between the police and its public that once held by location and time setting. For example, in order to see an event or action by police officer, one does not need to be spatially located as well as physically experienced the action. That event can make visible to others by someone who recorded and shared it through social media, regardless the location of the viewers. For instance, we can "experience" the condition of the Iraq war by simply watching the viral video in YouTube, shared by frontline soldiers who were stationed there (Papadopolous, 2009).

Following that, this new visibility is believed to have impact toward the way public perceived the police institutions. For example, it can enhance the accountability of the police and at the same time it can also cause "the destabilizing and destructive consequences" (p. 919). A perfect illustration for this statement is the case of Evan BRIMOB which has recorded controversial reactions within the country in 2009. In early

November 2009, fame within minutes was belonged to A. Evans T or famously known as Evan BRIMOB. Evans, one of junior officer at Mobile Brigade (BRIMOB) in Palembang, South Sumatera Indonesia, became instant talk among Indonesians because of his Facebook status. At that moment, Evans posted his opinion to the progress of controversial case "Cicak vs Buaya", a corruption scandal that involved both INP and the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) in his Facebook status (Tempo Interaktif, 2009; VivaNews, 2009).

Evan gained remarkable cynical responses because of this status update. In many mailing lists and internet forums, Evans turned out to be the target of various cyber attacks from outraged Indonesian online communities such as negative commentaries towards his reputation as police officer (Widjaya, 2009). In addition to that, a Facebook group was even formed to facilitate Evans haters' all across the country. The group was named "Evans BRIMOB dibenci masyarakat Indonesia" or "Indonesians hate Evans BRIMOB", and recorded more than 8.000 members within hours since Evans's case went viral in the site (Republika, 2009). While some of their reaction might have been critical, many Indonesians have been taking similar view with Solerman Bouti (as cited in Yudono, 2011), an expert in social and culture from University of Gorontalo in Indonesia, who stated that the usage of new social media by The INP (INP) officers have brought new state of visibility to the institution. Based on this, this article will look on how the case may reveal a new type of visilibity to the INP.

This research try to address on how do the case alter the visibility of the INP and what is the contribution of Facebook during the process?. Generally, this research is aimed to contribute in academic discourse of media study especially related to new social media. In more specific dimension, this article is intended to provide an analysis of social media and police relations in Indonesia by examining the cases within the concept of new visibility by Thompson.


## RESEARCH METHOD

This research will be mainly based upon Evan Brimob's Facebook status and profil as main evidences of the study case. In order to study the case, the research utilizes documentary analysis as well as literature review. Case study is performed to obtain facts related to the topic based on best practise. While literature review are necessary to accomplish profound understanding of the research topic's framework. They will also serve as sources of substantial data and information while documentary analysis is performed due to some subjective reasons.

The research also look at traditional mass media coverage related to the profil such as news, magazine or article in order to attain greater conception about the Facebook's status. Meanwhile, academic literatures such as books, journals and reports are also used as supporting materials. These materials will mainly focus on media, especially social media and their relations with police institution. In addition, the research data are collaborated with figures, statistic data, surveys, news, blogs from related websites such as the INP official web, YouTube, Kompasiana, Kompas Online and many more.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

Most individuals pay attention to how they present themselves before others and how others perceive them. As stated by Leary and Kowalski (1990), this concern makes most individuals very cautious in "determining precisely the kind of impression [they] wants to make and choosing how [they] will go about making that impression" (p. 39). As a result, individuals are willing to make considerable efforts to regulate their impressions. For example, many political rulers and leaders hire publicists and Public Relations (PR) personnel to carefully manage their image, spending a significant part of their budget aiming to "create and sustain a basis support for their power and policies" (Thompson, 2005, p. 41). In short, self-presentation is an essential area of people's lives.

Another possible way to administer impressions, probably the less-expensive but more often used technique, is by managing visibility or what is perceptible by the sense of sight. In fact, visibility management is believed as one of the crucial components in impression creation, particularly for powerful social institutions. Ray Prince, speechwriter for former U.S President Richard Nixon, further stated the importance of using this technique to power holders because "the high public official has to be 'on stage' more than most people, his words and actions are chosen for effect" (Prince, 1977, as cited in Sigelman, 2001, p. 1). However, the concept of visibility has significantly altered due to "a profound transformation" through the aid of communication technologies development (Thompson, 2011, p. 50). The availability of various media, especially new social media, is considered to evoke a new form of visibility for powerful organizations and can be "a weapon in the struggles" that the institutions might be involved in (p. 31).

The idea that media improvement has influenced the human development is also adopted by John B. Thompson. In his book, The Media and Modernity, Thompson (1995) explored changes within the society which he believed caused by media. One of the predominant changes that he offers is related to realm of public-private boundary of state and civil society, particularly focusing on alteration of state's visibility and impacts it may bring to the state's power.

To begin with, Thompson identifies foundation of visibility by illustrating the debates on dichotomy of public and private life within the context of power since the ancient Greek to the western societies. He suggests that the nature of dichotomy can be approached from two perspectives. The first perspective is drawn upon the relation between "institutionalized political power" of the state and "economic activity and personal relations" that are free from the state's absolute domination (Thompson, 1995, p. 121). Thompson provides a number of examples of how the meanings of "public" and "private" have been continually transformed as economic development has taken place. For instance, the state has to constantly adapt its related legal and political frameworks in managing the economic sectors, such as "pursuing policies aimed at regulating economic activity and offsetting the negative consequences of economic growth" (p. 122), which in turns re-modify private individuals' approaches to influence government policies.

The second perspective is derived from the implementation of the power itself. According to Thompson (1995), this perspective describes the public as an open sphere where the political entities can be seen by a wide audience. He also describes private as hidden or undisclosed place where bases for political power are formed and only shared with small amount of people. In other words, it can be said that this perspective embodies the implementation of political power within the context of "visibility and invisibility". For

example, many political leaders present themselves before their society in order to "affirm their power publicly (visibly), not to render public (visible) the grounds on which their decision and policies were based" (p. 123). The grounds are kept behind closed doors and invisible so that they do not contradict public displays of power which are carefully prepared and closely managed.

The second perspective serves as Thompson's basic framework to introduce the notion of new visibility by focusing on the contribution of media. Thompson utilizes a medium theory perspective within which the media are considered as environments that bring changes to the society. He does it by carefully analyses the history of communication media and impacts they bring to human social interaction. He argues that the development of media has influenced the power and its visibility (Thompson, 2005). For example, Thompson believes that it was the printed media, with their ability to disseminate information, that altered the publicness of power which once limited by "the sharing of a common locale" to be shared with "others who are not physically present at the time and place of its occurrence" in early modern European society (Thompson, 1995, p. 125 - 126). He also mentions the role of television in bringing a new field of vision for power holders by saying that TV has changed "their capacity to see and to be seen" (p.130). In short, the presence of media has impacted the visibility of power.

## DISCUSSION

*"Polri gak butuh masyarakat, tapi masyarakat yg butuh Polri. Maju terus kepolisian Indonesia, telan hidup2 cicak kecil . . ."*
Facebook status of Evans Brimob
(2009, as cited in Widjaya, 2009)

The first case that ignited the role of new social media in raising the visibility of the INP was the Evans Brimob's controversial Facebook case (Yogaswara, 2010). The case itself took place in November 5, 2009 when a Facebook user, who is also a junior officer in BRIMOB (Mobile Brigadier) at Palembang, South Sumatra Province, Indonesia, Bripda (Second Brigadier) A. Evans. T., posted a status to his Facebook page. The status, which means "Polri [The INP] does not need society but society needs Polri, keep forward the INP, swallow small geckos alive…", was intended to express Evans's support to the force related to the *Cicak* vs. *Buaya* (gecko vs. crocodile) case.

The *Cicak vs. Buaya* itself is given name to address a case which involved one of the higher officers in the INP, Comr. General Susno Duadji. Duadji was accused to manipulate a bribery scandal to trap two deputy-chairmen of the Corruption Eradication Commission, Chandra M. Hamzah and Bibit Samad Rianto, who were both running the investigation process for Duajdi's corruption lawsuit (Amarullah, 2010; Media Indonesia, 2011b; Tempo Interaktif, 2009; VivaNews, 2009), implying the INP as the *Buaya* (crocodile) whose power outstands the Corruption Eradication Commission, the *Cicak* (gecko).

However, Evans's status obviously cannot evoke the real meaning that it was actually expected to deliver. Once it was written on his Facebook account; the status directly invited numerous responses from his friends. Though few of the comments showed their compliance to what Evans' said, most of them were showing despicable feedback, agreeing that Evans and his status were reflecting the crocodile arrogance. For example, Helmy Satria

(2009, as cited in Sugianto, 2009) despised the way in which Evans illustrated his support to the INP by saying that Evans was so conceited and prompting him that the police need people and the other way around.

A comment also addressed Evans as someone who forgot that his salary was coming from the society's tax, implying that it was to the people that the INP has responsible for (Yudhistira Lembang, 2009, as cited in Suara Karya, 2009) while other mentioned him as *Polisi Kampungan* or immoral police (Maquis Spanish, 2009, as cited in Asydhad, 2009). Some of commentaries in Evans's Facebook status can be seen from the screenshot as below.



Figure 1 : Evans Brimob's status and the commentaries – Source (Widjaya, 2009)

In simple way, the status only reflected Evans's personal opinion to the case, an action that might refer to the utilization of Evans's "freedom of speech" right (Amarullah & Afrianti, 2009). However, the status is also believed to significantly raise the same issue as Norman's video, the new visibility of the INP. If the previous case is considered to provide the INP's internal region information, Evans's status would be explained as an exposure of its member situational improper conduct in which the INP would never conceal before its public gaze due to the potential implication it may bring to the force's impression as reputable institution. In the basis of Goffman's notion of performance, Evans's status has revealed a type of demeanour that would be addressed as a condition where a performer

may accidently conducts "activities, facts and motives which are incompatible with an idealized version of himself and his product" (Goffman, 1959, p. 48).

It is evidenced from Evans's counter comments for people who condemn his Facebook status. Rather than justified his Facebook status by using the INP's standard rules of properness, especially in the presence of its audience, Evans harshly defended his status with offensive words, signalling a condition when a performer "momentarily losing muscular control of himself" before his audience (Goffman, 1959, p. 52). Evans stated that the status was not aimed to mirror his arrogance as a police officer but to convey his profound disappointment toward people who choose to support the Corruption Eradication Commission not the INP. He coarsely called the commentators as "gak ngerti hukum" (incapable of understanding the law), "gak berpendidikan" (illiterate) and ""banyak koar" (talks too much). Evans even openly challenged the commentators to put a legal suit against him. To sum it up, Evans's status had raised the INP's visibility by exposing the exemplary of its member improper manner.



Figure 2, 3, and 4: Evans's provocative replies to his commentators – Source (Evan K Brimob, 2009)

Tracing back to the INP record, especially after nearly 13 years since this institution was formally separated from the military; its member's improper actions is one of the main problems that the INP has been struggling with. For example, Amnesty International (AI) in their 2010 report showed that the INP members highly applied violation while dealing with terrorism, caused at least "24 suspects killed by police in operations that did not meet national and international standards on the use of force" (Grazella, 2011). AI even elaborated how the police officers abusively tortured the convictions that mostly come from marginalized class in society such as commercial sex workers. Nonetheless, these series of reprehensible manners have always kept hidden from the public domain. Even if the actions are managed to be broadcasted in news media or television, most of them would be evaluated first by certain party such as editor or TV producer.

However, the case has proven how the presence of new social media, particularly Facebook, in Indonesia has obviously changed the situation. As stated by Thompson (2011, p. 64) that the development of new media, particularly related to the Internet, has set a new kind of "information battleground" among modern societies . This means that new social media has served as a territory where restricted access to the INP's actions that involved infringement of its organizational norms is widely opened. In addition, the fact that Indonesians Facebook users has reached more than 42 million people (Socialbakers.com, 2012), which in turns had enlarged the array of information flow about Evans's status, has made it more difficult for the INP to throw a veil of secrecy over its member's improper

conduct. This argumentation is demonstrated by the exceptional attention received by Evans's status soon after some of the commentators decided to disclose it to other Facebook users.

Compare to Norman Kamaru's video in which his dance and smiles received idyllic acceptance from the viewers, Evans's status was widely condemned by other many Facebook users (Ardiansyah, 2009). An infuriated user even encouraged all Indonesians to spread the status by stating that "his [Evans's] arrogance will unleash the people's antipathy toward the police who have already exposed their rottenness" (Yusron, 2009, as cited in Unspun, 2009). Movements of disliking the arrogant police were immediately set up, resulting the Facebook pages of *"Evans Brimob di Benci Rakyat Indonesia"* (Indonesians hate Evans Brimob) and *"Anti Evans Brimob"* (Against Evans Brimob), which both respectively collected more than 6000 and 1000 members within less than two hours from their creation (Republikaonline, 2009; Sutasoit, 2009).

Shortly after the status went viral in Kaskus, one of the biggest online forums for Indonesia's internet users, it gained greater public disapprovals and outrage from Indonesian online communities (Febrina, 2009). Indeed, a symbol of their infuriation over Evans's peculiar statement, some of the Kaskusers also started to manipulate Evans's pictures. They even high jacked the INP's official website and posted those pictures in the force's guest book (MasSukma, 2009) . In short, Facebook has lifted the INP's visibility by facilitating greater exposure over the INP's inadvertent performance.



Figure 5 and 6: Examples of Evans's manipulated pictures – Source (99waystodie, 2009)

Thus, the status was targeted at Evan's Facebook friends who were supporters of the KPK. But it has turned out to have a much wider public appeal when million Indonesians allow millions of other Indonesians know about Evans's case as well as present high coverage on the controversial issue around Evans. Based on this, it is understandable why the status had accomplished a success in raising the issue of the INP's visibility. Indeed, the status successfulness in elevating the INP's visibility to the next level had presented its own consequences to the force's performance. As proposed by Mawby (1999), one of possible implications that the high level of visibility could produce is the revolution in the police technological determinant, such as in its information-sharing process. Understanding how this case has gained its significance through new social media; the INP starts to utilize Facebook as one of its information sharing platforms.

In April 2010, five months after Evans's case, an official Facebook page of the force was created (Divisi Humas Mabes Polri, 2010) . Under the name of Divisi Humas Mabes Polri (Public Relations Division of the INP Headquarter), this page is operated by Biro Pusat Informasi dan Data (Central Bureau of Information and Data) of the INP Headquarter. In addition, the INP also joined Twitter with the account of @DivHumasPolri (DivHumas Mabes Polri, 2010). Both new social media practices are aimed to channel more effective
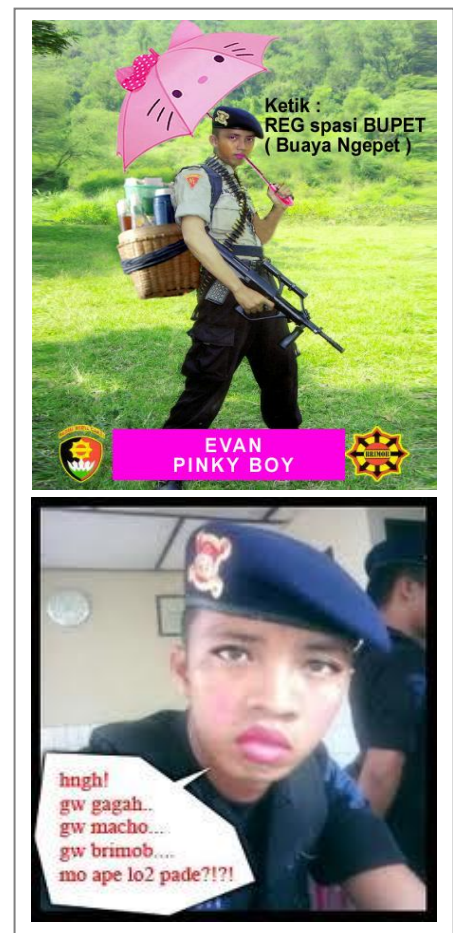
communication between the INP and its public (Satria, 2010). Hence, Evan's case has stimulated the adaptation of new social media as a part the INP's performance.

## CONCLUSION

To sum it up, Evans Brimob's Facebook status had grabbed the attention of Indonesia's societies. Aside from ignited remarkable responses from the whole country, the cases had also raised the issue of the INP's new visibility. This is happened because the status had displayed another dimension of the INP's by presenting its members behaviours at back-stage and exposing its officer's impertinent manner to the public domain. At the same time, the presence of new social media, particularly Facebook, had played significant roles in disseminating the INP's new visibility with its web 2.0 characteristics. As result to that, some implications to the force's performance and appearance are ignited.

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