

Propaganda, commodification, and resistance on invasion of illegal China workers hoaxes

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Abstract

In the end of 2016, the invasion of illegal China workers hoaxes spread in Indonesia. One of the sites that disseminated the hoaxes was Postmetro.info. At least, there were 160 hoaxes, that fabricated like news, that produced by the site. In the hoaxes, illegal China workers were depicted as a social infectious disease. Besides that, the millions of illegal China workers had invaded Indonesia. Even, any people labeled as Chinese posited as order threats, morality destroyers, and common enemy that should be annihilated. Postmetro.info claimed that the hoaxes were a manifestation of alternative media. It was because the dominant media controlled by the government. In more deliberately judgment, Postmetro.info didn't present alternative information, but propaganda that intentionally provoked emotions and narrow the complexities of the labor problems. The hoaxes purposely sold to advertisers to get financial benefit. That indication in media studies called as commodification. The way that used by Postmetro.info was changing the headlines of mainstream media with provocative words to evoke audience interests. The site never runs journalism procedures. Hereafter, the hoaxes went viral that could gain advertisements. That meant the site could have obtained income without working like the other media institution. Another important aspect that could be revealed was Postmetro.info deliberately resisted the power holders. The site could be assessed as the advocate for the marginalized voices of cultural and economic sectors. However, in the moral perspective, the site contradicts to journalism ethics and expectation of citizens that wanted the good resistance tactics.

Keywords

commodification, hoaxes, propaganda, resistance, illegal China workers.

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1 Introduction

“Do not want to be deceived by using Al Maidah 51!” Thus the words put forward by the Governor of Jakarta Basuki Tjahaja Purnama on Pramuka Island, Kepulauan Seribu, on September 27, 2016. Ahok, the nickname for Basuki, reminded that people were not easily cheated by politicians who deliberately used the verse to get power. Indirectly Ahok, who is ethnic Chinese and Christian religion, also challenged the power seekers did not run lies by manipulating references from religious scriptures. However, ironically, the challenge not to be easily

lied to and lies that hit Ahok himself. A series of mobilization of self-claiming crowds as Islamic Defense Action (Aksi Bela Islam), with the three-point characteristic to refer to the date of the demonstration (411, 212, 112, 313, and 505), made it an opinion that Ahok's challenge to be alert to such lies was a form of blasphemy. Finally, at the court, May 9, 2017, Ahok sentenced to 2 yr imprisonment. Ahok and, also, the prosecutor canceled the appeal that had been lodged.

It is not easy to fight lies. But, it turns out, it is not easy to avoid the lying news, or known as a hoax. Incidentally or not, since the "Ahok momentum" was rolling, the issue of the outbreak of hoaxes is so severe. The hoax is considered a contagious disease. The hoax is very strong exhaling panic. To the extent that *Tempo's* cover and main report (edition January 2–8, 2017) are entitled "*Hoax Outbreak*" (Wiji, 2017). What is called a hoax in this context is not the lie itself, but a deliberate lie to exaggerate an event or remove parts of the event. The hoax is distinguished from the fake news that has no reference to any facts, as *Tempo* defines the hoax in its main report.

Since the end of 2016 there have been a number of hoaxes related to the Ahok and hoax cases that contained harsh criticism of political elites controlling the powers of bombings, shootings and assassinations in 411 (November 4, 2016); appeared hoax which is a twist of news *Kompas.com* (edition October 14, 2016) titled "Ahok: You think we BOHONG (lying) build mosque and raise the hajj Marbut?" To "Ahok: You think we NIAT (willing) build a mosque and raise the hajj Marbut?"; Ahok's handshake with Rizieq Shihab, the man who claimed to be the high priest of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI); Jakarta today, a media silence referring to a massive demonstration on October 11, 2016, but no such event was intended; the arrival of 500 people from China who deliberately presented to defend Ahok in the face of Islamic Defense Action; and police investigated Amien Rais who repeatedly accused President Joko Widodo of protecting Ahok (BBC News Indonesia, 2016). After Ahok got a verdict, it also appeared "Letter from Pak Ahok for all of us" which contained a request to Veronica Tan, Ahok's wife, to read the contents of the letter to his supporters. Apparently, "letter from Pak Ahok" was a hoax too (Purba, 2017).

The hoax that was the most evoking attention and even getting a response from the holder of power is the invasion of ten million illegal workers (Tenaga Kerja Asing/TKA ilegal) from China. *Postmetro.info* was one of the websites that so highlighted the case. By entering the keyword "TKA China" in the search feature on the site, then we obtained as many as 160 "news" about the case. The headlines displayed to highlight the case are extremely provocative, such as "Prevent Unlawful Forbidden Chinese, Government Proposed Review of Visa Free Policy" (edition of December 14, 2016); "The Government Must Be More Vigilant on the Behavior of Foreign Workers of China" (edition of December 12, 2016); "MCC Asks Jokowi to Regulate Chinese Workers" (edition of August 4, 2016); "The invasion of the Chinese Foreign Workers Make the People Lose Livelihood, the SBSI Chairs Invite the All Resistance Action Camp" (edition of July 31, 2016), or "Amien Rais: Indonesia Will Become the State of China" (edition of September 5, 2015). All things labeled China positioned by this site as posing a threat for norms, destroyers for the order, and a common enemy figure that must be fought totally to the threshold. Hateful expressions were also present there.

The headlines displayed by *Postmetro.info* show a political stance that explicitly opposes the government. This site runs profiling on the presence of foreign workers from China as "a social infection and the number of millions who entered Indonesia" (edition of December 26, 2016). But who is *Postmetro.info*? According to Septiaji Eko Nugroho from Anti Hoax Society, this site, other than *Nusanews*, is a hoax spreader. This site is managed by students in the area of Sumatra. Hoax deployment actions run by the site are able to gain high financial returns. Within a year, the site is expected to earn a profit of IDR600 000 000 to IDR700 000 000 (Sugiharto, 2016). While the hoax spreading people are making a profit, the government responds to the issue with great agitated. Jokowi strongly denied the number of foreign workers from China was as much as ten million let alone twenty million people. The exact figure is 21 000 people. Ten million is the target number of tourists from China who come to Indonesia (Ihsanuddin, 2016). Search by other institution shows those foreign workers from China who work in Indonesia as many as 21 271 people. It is indeed the largest number of TKA working in the country (Atharini, 2016). But, these hoaxes politically managed to make the government hooked and inflamed. For *Postmetro.info* itself, the hoaxes could present provocation and gained money.

The hoaxes spouted *Postmetro.info* is in the relationship of economic and political interests. More than that, from the aspect of a hoax as the art of deceiving, what has been rolled out this site was also successful. There are a number of features in hoaxes, namely [1] all successful hoaxes are deceiving; [2] the entire hoax has an artistic, and even aesthetic, dimension; [3] the entire hoax is framed by a purpose that is completely deliberate; [4] hoax has a public dimension, so it must be staged; [5] hoax has an event-quality; [6] hoaxes are triggered by vengeful resentment and equally provoked outrage; [7] there is instability of what the hoax maker wants, so there is something that can be witnessed in excess of what its own makers mean; and [8]

hoaxes are a kind of deconstruction that works through multiple inscriptions, which mimics what they attack and attempts to replace the target organizational system (Fleming & O'Carroll, 2010, pp.45–59).

Thus, the absolute requirement of a successful hoax to deceive is to be disguised in certain formulas. That's the strategy of the hoax maker in embracing the art of deceiving. If you want to outwit the broad public, journalism formula can be used as a strategy. If you want to deceive the scientists, the formula of writing a journal that seems serious, strict, and scientific can also be an option. That's what Alan Sokal did when "beating up" the thinkers of cultural studies, postmodernism, and followers of the Left tradition in general. In his *Transgressing the Boundaries: Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity* (Sokal, 1996, pp.217–252), Sokal succeeds in deceiving well-known editors from a prominent journal. Moreover, what Sokal has done is to run a parody, staging an imitation with the sole purpose of mocking.

Why Sokal successfully rolled his hoax? Aspects of rhetoric! That's what Sokal used to trick *Social Text* editors. From the perspective of rhetoric, there are four things that can be revealed from Sokal hoax. First, critical or ideological stance. Sokal calls himself a Leftist—in real life indeed Sokal like that—by claiming to start a liberation science creation project capable of carrying out resistance and can even replace capitalist science. Sokal estimated the "truly progressive science" that serves "radical democratization of all aspects of social, economic, political, and cultural life". Second, the *topoi* (the theme of rhetoric). Sokal framed its article as an evaluation of the principles of the new science of quantum gravity according to radical democratic ideals for a progressive science. Third, the style. Sokal noticed the low-level rhetoric, syntax, and lexicon of the journal articles. *Syntax*: Sokal used long, complex sentences with high nominalization, which is typical of *Social Text* articles. *Qualifications*: Sokal often mobilized fencing and qualifications that indicate the types of rhetoric of cultural studies. *Wordplay* skills. Sokal involved wordplay which gave a signal for the origin of French deconstructionist on *Social Text*. *Jargon*: Sokal exerts the jargon of cultural studies, including even though not limited to the following keywords: hegemony, domination, emancipatory, dialecticism, deconstruction, transcendence, ideology, capitalism, problematization, and transgression. Fourth, *quote*. Sokal is obviously involved in and able to show the style of writing according to *Social Text* editorial style. Sokal cites the critics of the Marxist, socialist, postmodernist, and scientific studies. Sokal simply structured a typical frame of reference for cultural studies. Sokal did not provide any detailed theory or technical terminology. Sokal also did not show how the quotations support his argument in a final note (Secor & Walsh, 2004, pp.69–91). Thus, Sokal's lies are able to be revealed with a rhetorical approach.

Various hoaxes had been produced by *Postmetro.info* and Sokal can present and cheat audiences for being formulated in convincing rhetorical techniques. The many audiences, the political elite, and even a prominent journal involving famous intellectuals as their editors can be deceived by hoaxes which have political aims, make money, or simply intend to play games. Hoaxes that proclaimed the invasion of millions of foreign workers from China was so amazing. The tone of anger was deliberately kept on purpose. The goal is to provoke the public to wreak a similar rage as scheduled by *Postmetro.info*. Similarly, Sokal's writings are able to give a profound impression as a scientific article that weighs heavily. Various concepts that refer to various keywords cultural studies and postmodernism deliberately deployed. Readers and even editors, who are not meticulous must be easily distracted. It was thought to contain new ideas. But, as it turns out, what the writer wants to say is a hoax that aims to joke, condescend, and show sensitivity to a certain type of science that is accused of being not rigorous, not objective, and ultimately unscientific.

In such a context, it becomes important to understand the concept of rhetoric. Therefore, rhetoric is not limited to speeches in front of the masses. Rhetoric is a technique of persuasion to convince others. It is true that rhetoric is defined as the use of strategic communication, both orally and in writing, to achieve specific goals (Kuypers & King, 2009, pp.1–12). Hit the government while provoking the public into expressing anger requires rhetoric. Pouring ideas in the form of articles for journals that are so prominent would require rhetoric. In fact, the style of writing—from the title selection to the selection of words that are deemed appropriate—set by a particular media company or journal is also the rhetoric. The rhetorical way is deliberately taken so that the quality of news and journals are well preserved. Anyone who wants to participate in the writing of ideas should refer to the techniques of rhetoric that have been established. But, at the same time, the rhetoric can be breached for the purpose of making fun of it. The rhetorical means were surpassed. The intention to ridicule the authorities and provoke the anger of the masses was achieved. The purpose of joking, as another name for mocking, was also easy to say. That way, the other side of the hoax is ridiculous rhetoric that serves as a culture jamming (Harold, 2004, pp.189–211). The government and the managers of scientific journals deliberately made a pause to excite the feeling of embarrassment and depression.

The similarity of hoaxes produced *Postmetro.info* and Sokal is in the aspect of rhetoric that serves to infuse the art of lying, but different in formulating goals and provoking the audience response. That is in

this context the so-called *mode* or way. "The journalism" of *Postmetro.info* is so multifarious attention to aspects of completeness 5W + 1H (Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How) and protrusion news values, such as the popularity of sources, the proximity of events, social significance, and political importance. In another aspect, *Postmetro.info* is very loose and deliberately ignores the ethical dimension of journalism writing. Meanwhile, Sokal used mode of scientific papers writing with such attention to aspects of language and the stringency of concepts. Ironically, however, Sokal's ethics is questioned because his work is no more than a realization of disparagement to other scientists who are not at odds with their scientific perspectives.

Technologically, the hoaxes produced by *Postmetro.info* show a very different scope (hence, the comparison and discussion of the Sokal hoax is finished to this aspect). It must be stated firmly that *Postmetro.info* is in historical typology in the period or era of interactivity, or the digital age, the internet or the period of the second media. That is the period almost contrasted with the darkness of the mass media. Such is the age in which the technological discourse is shown by great worship and accentuating giving distinctions between the old and the new (Holmes, 2005). Referring to and running the contextualization of Walter Benjamin's idea of "the work of art in the era of mechanical reproduction" (Benjamin, 2006, pp.18–40), what is shown rapidly *Postmetro.info* is the manifestation of the "the hoaxes in the era of digital reproduction". If in a mechanical age, technologically demonstrated in photography and film, the aura of art that shows authority and charisma alone produces dismantled, then in the digital age that happens must be more radical again.

If further disclosed the technological side of this medium, Benjamin's idea of new media public spaces is able to provide guidance on key aspects of digital culture, such as convergence culture and various forms of media audiences, such as fans, bloggers, gamers, social users, and so on (Kang, 2014, p.112) as well as hoaxers (hoax makers like those active in *Postmetro.info*). Furthermore, in an era called digital reproduction, it can be revealed also complex relationships to gain financial benefits, the problem of circulation and reproduction of works, the relations of public and persona, and information communication technology that gives emphasis on economic and political dimensions. Another very important aspect in this context is that digital reproduction techniques emphasize popular forms that dare to challenge authority over the owners of works considered legitimate (Franklin, 2002, pp.591–624). That is, the presence of hoax makes it not only the government that made confusion about it. Various mainstream media also showed great anger because their journalism works "hijacked". The established media institutions get disadvantaged because their financial gains are stolen by hoaxes producer as like *Postmetro.info* who only "polishes facts" without ever running the journalism procedures.

It's just further than that, Benjamin's idea of art in the era of mechanical reproduction that is adapted to the development of digital reproduction provides an extreme feature of what is called the culture of auratic hijacking. The desire to participate by displaying something post-production into the internet is shown through reception, production, and reproduction. That is what is called the aspect of audience acceptance that magnifies (augments) and extends the works it consumes. In other words, it is called the *author-ization* (*author* as the root for both *author* and augmentation). The author and extension of the work is piracy which only occurs because of the redemption of creative expansion (Rodriguez–Ferrandiz, 2012, pp.396–412).

What *Postmetro.info* runs is the hijacking of journalism works from other established media. The people who work on this site are mere readers who hijack the news that is considered so great and full of aura because it is considered to convey the facts honestly and candidly. In the game of fingers that move digital polishes, then came the various hoaxes that raised a variety of issues that are considered crucial to certain economic and political interests. Thus, the focus of this paper discussion is the context of the political economy, which has been exposed, covering the emergence of hoaxes and the goal of *Postmetro.info* producing and distributing hoaxes. The purpose of writing this paper is to discuss *Postmetro.info* claims as an alternative media that deliberately spread propaganda in provocative ways; to describe *Postmetro.info*'s strategy to make the various hoaxes produced profit economically and politically, and to show that *Postmetro.info* runs a resistance against the ruling elites by deliberately producing and distributing various hoaxes.

2 Findings and Discussions

2.1 Not an Alternative, But a Propaganda Pumper

Various hoaxes presented *Postmetro.info* may make this site as an alternative medium because it is different from mainstream media. In terms of format, alternative media can refer to what are considered to be intermediaries to convey a message. The medium is considered capable of being a tool for expressing ideas in certain groups of people. In this regard, it is primarily a minority, in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, religiosity, nationality, disability, as well as from any marginalized side that can not be overcome by the ongoing order of power. Thus, alternative media is basically political to the various social imbalances that occur. The aim is to run against the political regime that is in control of power. The agenda is to roll out social change to get better justice.

Various claims are also presented by Abdul Hamdi Mustafa, editor in chief of *Postmetro.info* site written under the name AH. Mustapha. The label attached to this site is "Independent Media Portal" described as "not a company/corporation". The ideology of the managers of this site is "moderate religious nationalists". Historically searched, the *Postmetro.info* title is an abbreviation of *Postingan Mahasiswa Elektro* (the Electrical Student Posts) established in 2015 by Abdul Hamdi Mustafa (Sunudyantoro, dkk, 2017, pp.28–33). The claim that Mustafa has made against *Postmetro.info* is a propaganda media. The media, according to its narrative, is radical and critical of the government with the technique of transmitting provocative issues. Not surprisingly, the government is hostile to this kind of media. What has been his satisfaction is that *Postmetro.info* managed to mobilize the masses in a demonstration of 2 December 2016 (212) which called for Ahok to be imprisoned (Hidayat, 2016). But, is this site worth categorized as an alternative media?

Alternative media relates to alternative communication. If understood simply as a process of processing, distribution, and consumption, then media/communication is the name of the use of media products. Thus, alternative media should enable alternative communication. It is meant to create an articulation of social order that is different from and often contrary to the dominant order. In the perspective of the mass culture, the role of the alternative media is to uncover the dominant ideological mask, which leaves people out of false consciousness by abandoning the oppressive relationships. The problems facing alternative media are realizing the goals of popular participation, being responsive to the fullest and sensitive to emerging ways of thinking, and maximizing the means of expressing (Hamilton, 2000, pp.357–378).

Alternative media refers to the emerging communication experience as the need to offset the state and/or commercial mass media. Although less important in numbers, there are also "alternative media" voicing the interests of far-right groups. For the same reason—against commercial media and countries that do not represent their views—these hate groups deliver racist and violent messages. In addition, religious alternative media have also formed several small radio stations owned by new sects—most of which are known to be very small—scattered in rural areas of Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Alternative media of this kind destroys the network of rural–urban and rural communities with messages that exploit dissatisfaction, suggesting violence or blind faith as a solution (Dagron, 2004, pp.41–63).

Alternative media cannot be compared with mainstream media. The purpose of the presentation of both types of media is very different, perhaps even contradictory. Alternative media is patterned not to pursue profits because what became its agenda is to create awareness for the community. Alternative media is trying to voice the aspirations of minority groups who had been oppressed and marginalized in the political arena. If so far the way to measure the success of alternative media with the viewpoint of the dominant media or mass culture, of course, this type of media experiencing defeat. Alternative media may only live because it is supported by its own community or even gets donations from a number of agencies.

Concerns about the existence of alternative media, presumably, are directed to this type of media who dare to take risks to voice groups that have been muted. But, in this era of neoliberal capitalism, it turns out, alternative media can play a role in running opposition to the hegemonic ideology. Alternative media can articulate new social movements and symbolic resistance. Yet it must be clearly understood that the symbolic opposition can undermine the critical potential of alternative media (Andersson, 2012, pp.752–764). This shows that as capitalism rapidly demonstrates its strength, alternative media are able to follow the agenda of corporations that are merely aimed at pursuing profits around the world.

There are four more equitable approaches to seeing the existence of alternative media. First, serve the community. Second, as an alternative to mainstream media. Third, connecting alternative media with civil society. And, fourth, the alternative media as a rhizome. Thus it is clear that alternative media indeed provide services to groups that have not been voiced their aspirations by the dominant media. An

alternative medium is not the dominant medium that was born and raised by a particular company to accumulate the highest possible financial gain. Alternative media operate within civil society, so strong state and corporate intervention can be avoided. And, as a rhizome, the alternative media focuses on three aspects, namely the role of cross-border civil society, its difficult existence to understand, and running interconnection and linking markets and countries (Bailey, Cammaerts, & Carpentier, 2007, pp.5–30). So, it should be stated that the alternative media is different from any aspect of the dominant media. Creating a measure for two things that can not be reconciled is a way to undermine and belittle the existence of alternative media.

It is more appropriate to say that alternative media have a special position to always be prepared to be critical of dominative and repressive circumstances. It means that alternative media displays the opportunities of the existence of oppressed groups, rolls out antagonisms against reality, and has the potential to carry out social change. The alternative media, therefore, sue dominance, express the stances of groups and individuals who are oppressed and dominated and raises arguments for a more cooperative society. The product of this critical medium is to creative imagination. However, they are indeed dialectical because they are involved in dynamics, non-identities, disconnections, and unexpected. What this alternative medium can afford is a counter-public sphere. Critical media can be viewed as a communicative dimension of the rival public space (Fuchs, 2010, pp.173–192). Furthermore, it can be argued that alternative media is a necessity that has been situated in the context of the vision of alternative society (Sandoval, & Fuchs, 2010, pp.141–150.).

It is not easy to actualize the alternative media. Moreover, it is assumed that the alternative media is used to encourage the emergence of counterpart public spaces and emancipation of alternative community growth opportunities. As a counterpart public, of course, alternative media can be vocal to a group of repressive oppression, such as the wasted minority of faiths, silent nonheterosexual groups, and even muted people with disabilities. They are the outcasts who rarely get the space and time in public spaces that have been there. Moreover, this critical alternative media is meant to create the vision of the alternative society. It is a society that is meant to be inclusive because it respects difference and even respects diversity and accomplishes justice for anyone involved in social change.

The development of information and communication technology, in this connection, is the internet, can also be used to roll out alternative media, especially for anarchists and libertarians (Atton, 2006, pp.133–152). In an optimistic perspective, it can be asserted that the internet can serve as an alternative medium because it can connect various layers of society and mobilize the masses. Furthermore, alternative media can be used to help the fulfillment of justice that has been run by various social movements (Downing, 2008, pp.40–50). Thus, groups that have not been able to access conventional media and the internet, for example, can be helped by the presence of very caring social movements to voice their interests.

There is indeed a close connection between social movements and social change. A social movement is determined by social structure, political divisions, and collective action (Della, & Diani, 2006, pp.36–42). In this context, social movements are defined as "organized collective activities that deliberately create or resist social change". Meanwhile, social change can be defined as "cultural and community structures transformed into new forms" (Stolley, 2005, p.179). It is not easy for alternative media to do this. At least, there is a role that must be played by alternative media, which is to help various collective activities, either directly in the field or in the virtual world. It is meant to mobilize the masses so that the ruling party gets tremendous pressure. Not enough with it, social movements must also be able to create public opinion that can provide benefits for the movement being launched. This is one of the roles that can be played by alternative media, namely to make public opinion. Thus, the various circles that have not supported the social movement to emancipate the oppressed, in the end, began to open their awareness to further support for this social movement. In that domain, there is a connection between alternative media, social movements, and social change.

The presence of alternative media cannot be ignored because it is considered too small and does not have a long life cycle. Alternative media cannot be rooted in a dominant way of the view. Indeed, there is a deliberate attempt to use that point of view with the aim of eliminating the importance of alternative media. What alternative media can expose is the civilized resistance of various groups that have been oppressed. These marginal groups are of course not accommodated by the dominant media because they do not meet the commercial criteria. Meanwhile, these oppressed should be voiced by alternative media resistance. The goal is to create justice for everyone.

Alternative media, as present at various news sites claiming to be independent on the internet, may provide the color of pluralism in relation to ownership of media capital, as claimed by *Postmetro.info*. Pluralism in this context, as Doyle (Doyle, 2002, pp.11–12) puts it, is commonly associated with media diversity, the presence of many independent media and voices, and the emergence of differences in political

opinion and cultural representations in the media. That is the hope and needs to be shown by the citizens. However, Doyle (2002, pp.14–26) also put forward a number of determinants that enable media pluralism to be realized, namely market size/wealth, supplier news diversity, resource consolidation, and output diversity.

But, whether presenting various hoaxes derived from twisted other news worth mentioning as an alternative media? And, is the hoax itself an alternative? Is the blog "Amina Abdallah Arraf al Omari" launched in February 2011 in the middle of the "Arab Spring", under the name *A Gay Girl in Damascus* that outlines the details of Amina's life as an activist of LGBTIQ (Lesbian Gay Bi-Sexual Transgender Intersex Queer) and her admission as a lesbian in the ultra-conservative Syrian capital is an alternative? The blog, it turns out, was made by Tom McMaster, a man from the West and heterosexual. The blog reveals how audiences can engage in hoax transmission and circulation. Personal sounds, authentic perspectives, are high-value commodities, and digital contexts make this even more real (Cardell & Maguire, 2015, pp.205–221). Hoax which is intended to voice the aspirations of nonheterosexual women is worth mentioning as (media) alternative?

The goal as well as any hoaxes, especially made by sites that claim to be news sites but naught in journalism and deliberately indulgence provocation, is in no way worth mentioning as an alternative medium. What's more, what *Postmetro.info* is doing is showing hatred towards China and Chinese ethnic groups. More precisely if the hoax site, as claimed by its own management, is the propaganda medium. The so-called propaganda, referring to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is "information, especially of biased and misleading, used to promote or publicize certain political intentions or views" (Brennan, 2017, pp.34–48). In addition, propaganda is also not concerned with the dissemination of information but exerting emotion. The purpose of propaganda is not to broaden the understanding of complex issues, but rather to narrow it (Steuter & Wills, 2008, p.18). It is also the case with *Postmetro.info* that does not deserve to be called an alternative media, but rather as a hoax spreader site that continues to pump propaganda.

2.2 Which Deceives, Which is Viral, and Which are Sold

The widespread of hoaxes cannot be separated from the development of digital technology. Meanwhile, technology not only deals with technical issues, such as how to use the internet or how to keep data safe from viruses. Technology, more than that, is a *logos*, way of thinking, about the presence and existence of tools to deal with human problems more substantially. Technology, by doing so, has an impact on how people put themselves before those devices. Is a man a decisive actor or, quite the contrary, man is determined by the various tools. In that context, technology has been positioned and deliberately positioned as ideology. Moreover, information and communication technology that can make people run interactions with other parties far apart. But, worse thing is this technology can be utilized as intelligent machines to run manipulation, that is an act of deceiving. That's what happens when *Postmetro.info* produces various hoaxes.

In production practices and hoaxes dissemination, the power that plays an important role is digital technology. There are two properties of digital technology that must be known. First, transparent, because of the discourse of technology is entirely a reflection of the reality of digital technology (for example, network technology enabling flexibility and interactivity). Second, instructive, because this discourse ultimately describes the operation of society (the flexibility of digital technology creates economic flexibility). The digital technology also provides the possibility that the presence of integration of production into technology networks produces blurring of boundaries between companies and networks and between producers and consumers. It is called the prosumer, the individual and the autonomous unit of production, consumption, and entrepreneurship (Fisher, 2010, p.7).

The people behind *Postmetro.info*, cynically, can be considered practicing "entrepreneurship" in the age of digital technology. This can be read in the address of the website that writes that "broadly online media is distributing and containing news sourced from the following media". Then, mentioned 27 news sites. Not enough with that, plus the word "etc". This means that, once again, *Postmetro.info* does not run various journalism work procedures, such as interviewing certain sources, going to the field to observe events, and processing secondary data to support the completeness of the news. *Postmetro.info* only boasted it while claiming as "Independent Media Portal". It is as if this hoax spreader is an institution that operates on the principles of journalism. In fact, what happens is this site just pick up the news from a number of other media.

There are two types of work that *Postmetro.info* does. First, the way that the content it presents can quickly go viral, multiple account counts are required and follow the account of others who have many

followers. Mustafa stated that there are 5–10 accounts to run the share of the news. The accounts that followed this site then retweet the various "news" that the site displayed, to then spread everywhere. Second, polish the content. People who work at *Postmetro.info* "take advantage of the moment" that is being the source of many people's commotion, for example, the invasion of illegal foreign workers from China and religious blasphemy that ensnare Ahok. In a day, this site can make 70–80 content. The various content that copies only from large media. The main threads are in the title section deliberately "made in more interesting language" and "more easily understood", resulting in many users. If calculated, then in a month this site is able to generate money of IDR25 000 000 to IDR30 000 000. Most of the revenue comes from Google AdSense. The smaller rest comes from ads that start in October 2016 (Franklin, 2002, pp.591–624).

Based on two types of work done *Postmetro.info* it shows that the managers of this site at first are news consumers. After that, they run various polishes on the news to be produced as hoaxes. This is concrete proof that the technology in this digital age can give the possibility for some people to become prosumer. The "panacea" that makes this site a financial benefit is viral. How to package the news with a provocative title might be to attract netizens and at the same time spread it as widely as possible so that many people like it. Clicks, retweets, shares, hits, or views are a number of markers to show how the hoax is read, liked, and distributed. That's what makes the polished hoax with these boasting strokes become viral.

Viral, in fact, becomes a slogan or keyword that many people pursue because viral shows the popularity of a particular content. Viral is a concept borrowed from medical science to refer to how new ideas and innovations on the internet are flourishing at such an impressive pace (Bollier, 2008, pp.1–2). In subsequent developments in the digital world, viral is inherent with marketing activities, resulting in the term viral marketing. There are two things that must be understood with this concept. First, viral gives connotations about infection. It shows the rapid spread across the various individuals and communities, growing exponentially in each cycle. Secondly, going viral refers to the spread of something, especially in the context of social media, more than just information (Mills, 2012, pp.162–169). So, anything can be viral in the digital world. Photos, videos, sounds, news, and moreover a provocative hoaxes can go viral. The thing to note is that the viral can be engineered. What *Postmetro.info* does is not just polishing the news into a hoax, but also how to market the hoax to get scattered and "contagious". The more viral, the more it sells. That's the standard formula.

In another aspect it may be argued that the viral texts do indeed subversive the narratives of the country on a particular event. The trick is to introduce fragmentary and contradictory views that impede the state's ability to define its full meaning (Kumar, 2015, pp.232–247). In such a context, the country seemed to experience a variety of stuttering when facing a hoax about the invasion of ten million foreign workers from China. The state is so incapable of facing attacks directed against Ahok, even more so when the issue is framed in a matter of religious observations conducted by someone who has been labeled infidel (*kafir*) and non-native (*non-pribumi*). Thus, the hoax is not merely a lie, but also that in the falsehood the voice of the public is as if it were uttered. The phenomenon, in a more extreme comparison example, occurs in a killer character called Jack the Ripper. A number of brutal murders of several prostitutes in London, in the fall of 1888, greatly shocked the public. In that incident, letters were written by the killer to the editor of the newspaper. In fact, the people who wrote a number of letters were the journalist themselves. That's where hoaxes happen that can actually show a communal narrative of society. The hoax is a way to articulate and control collective anxieties (Remington, 2004, pp.199–221). So, a hoax can be an expression of disappointment with government policy. That is why some types of the hoax are considered to contain issues that are so sensitive and incapable of overcoming the government quickly to go viral, even if engineered.

Only, the motive to criticize the government or voice the aspirations of the people must not be separated from the push *Postmetro.info* to gain economic benefits. Because not all the news produced by mainstream media polished again the title to be displayed as a hoax. In fact, this economic motive is stronger than political impulse. In the classical Marxian perspective, economics is the base that determines the superstructure. In other formulas, the upper building is no more than the epiphenomena, a shadow, just so determined by the economy (Marx, 1994, pp.198). So, the urge to criticize the government, unite the people, voice the aspirations of the oppressed, or attack Ahok is driven by the will to get financial profit. Nothing more is the result of calculating the acquisition of mere money.

In the study of the political economy of communications, what *Postmetro.info* has done is a commodity. What is called commodification means the process of transforming goods and services deemed to have value to become goods and services that have commercial value (exchange rate)? This commodification process contains two significant things in communication research. First, the practices and communications technologies of the commodification process are generally in the whole society. Second, commodification is an entry point for understanding communication institutions and practices. Three

things that are commodified in this connection are media content, audience, and labor (Mosco, 2009, pp.11–14). More than that, *Postmetro.info* does a trick as it entirely sells content from other media by simply giving polishes in the title section.

In the case of commodification done *Postmetro.info*, this happens on a digital technology called Web 2.0. When compared with the mainstream media there is what is called by Smythe (Smythe, 1977, pp.1–27) as the audience commodity, a media audience recorded by the corporation for the data then sold to advertisers, then in this digital media era, similar phenomena also occur. This time the name is no longer a passive audience because it only holds a remote control tool to change the television channel according to taste, but rather what is called a user because it can interactivity and participate with various platforms provided by Web 2.0. However, these users are also monitored by the custodian as it happens in panoptical prison and vice versa the prisoners cannot see the guards (Danaher, Schirato, & Webb, 2000, p.xiv). Social media users also experience their privacy oversight as do mainstream media audiences (Gandy, 1990, pp.166–179). Of course, the privacy data of Web 2.0 users are not captured in conventional peplemeter (a measurement device used to measure television viewing habits), but has been stored and processed with much more sophisticated digital tools.

Explained further, the Web 2.0 that creates the phenomenon of hoax virality is also not free from surveillance. If the hoax goes viral because of the dominant role of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, then the oversight of the user, who also plays as a worker, on the content of hoaxes must have gained such intensive oversight from the Web 2.0 company. Indeed, many claims that Web 2.0 is regarded as the presence of producer, a hybrid of the user/producer role that inevitably establishes forms of participation. Others call this web presence a participatory surveillance meaningful as online social networking practices that can be considered as empowerment, voluntary engagement with others and constructing an identity, and can be described as participatory. Participatory monitoring is a technique of keeping friends by monitoring information shared by others. There are a number of other names to refer to this phenomenon, namely "participatory panopticon", "democratization of surveillance", or "participatory/social panopticon" (Fuchs, 2012, pp.46–47). As if participating by dividing and engaging in the virtues of a hoax is a free activity when there is an oversight.

This means that there are issues to be aware of, ie various Web 2.0 companies use ownership of user-generated content and user data behavior. Consequently, Web 2.0 companies have user data, while users do not have corporate data. This is an asymmetrical relationship of economic power. The asymmetric ownership structure is stronger as Web 2.0 corporations accumulate capital owned by a handful of people who have excessive legality and are not the case with users. User data are seized by the companies for the purpose of making money. The internet is an undemocratic synopticon (oversight of the few people done by many people) and a system of silencing. Web 2.0 is not a participatory tool, pointing to more negative aspects, in critical concepts like class, exploitation, and value (Fuchs, 2012, pp.52–54). Thus, virality is not a celebration of freedom, but a system of silencing.

Various hoaxes produced and consumed as well as *Postmetro.info* positions as prosumer on Web 2.0 as if giving freedom to politics and, in particular, achieve financial profit. But what happened was not so. This web just shows the imbalance of positions that provide great benefits for corporate parties to know and sell data users of social media to advertisers. This is the era of surveillance on digital media that actually makes the user unaware that they are being monitored. Their various behaviors and tastes are taken by corporations who are skillfully utilized to make a profit. It shows *Postmetro.info* is no longer a prosumer, but a product sold to advertisers.

2.3 No News, Hoax So Be

In the end, how to understand the beginning of the spread of hoaxes propagated by *Postmetro.info* and politics in Indonesia? Apparently, there is a strong link there. Initially, Mustafa harbors emotions even though the 2014 Presidential Election is over. Prabowo who had been supported by him suffered defeat. And, Jokowi be the winner. Mustafa said that after the momentum, the government's power cannot be balanced. Politicians and observers who support the government can be more dominant in the mainstream media. Not to mention, they also supported buzzers in favor of the government. Mustafa considers the opposition group having a corner. From these sentiments, Mustafa founded *Postmetro.info*. Mustafa acknowledged that he had spread rumors, such as blasphemy by Ahok and the flood of foreign workers from China to Indonesia. Mustafa also established relationships with politicians and observers as opposed to the government. "I chose the opposition, so I provocatively criticize the government. There is satisfaction in criticism. War on the internet for me exciting," said Mustafa on another occasion (Wiji, 2017, p.32).

The various Mustafa statements show that the emergence of resistance is an inevitable act when power is at a hegemonic stage. Indeed, hegemonic power cannot be understood as a power that can no longer be resisted. Instead, the hegemony presupposes the emergence of resistance. However, the party that is holding hegemony able to run the negotiations so that its power can still be run by mobilizing cooptation cross class. However, not all parties can be embraced into the hegemony. This is where various oppositions emerge in various forms, from open-ended ones, such as demonstrations, even revolutions, and the spread of hoaxes (as Mustafa does), to the closed, such as allusion or satire in theaters on stage to editorial cartoons on newspaper pages. This resistance is unlikely to be extinguished. The formula is simple: where there is dominance, there must be resistance. Every mastering is done, then at the same time, it gives birth to resistance. That's where the presence of radical media or propaganda media, as Mustafa claims, which presents oppositional politics as having an important force in expressing the continuing resistance. In fact, when the news cannot be produced alone, a hoax so be.

Resistance appears as an oppositional form of hegemony that has been considered to be too confined and even a little space for those outside the power structure. Resistance, indeed, can be done openly through a series of demonstrations and petition submissions, for example. But a more concealed form can also be taken, through cynicism, humor, and expressions of dissatisfaction with the ruling party. Only, from another aspect, that resistance also gives a favorable impression to the ruling party. Because those who control the power presents an opportunity for the opposing parties to roll out the negotiations. The resistance, then, is regarded as an unattached couple of the hegemony itself. Resistance is able to provide justification or legitimacy for the ruling party to continue to perpetuate his power. Of course, the exception occurs when the power is deemed to have no longer any moral or political validity by the people.

One of the areas used to run that resistance is the hoax especially when the hoax is very likely to become popular culture. It can be argued that a number of hoaxes, at a large or small level, depend on our willingness to believe in unusual events, extreme coincidence, unexpected results, startling facts, or supernatural events. Audiences gain pleasure by accepting the impossible as for right—that's what their name is deceived—because they get optimism that produces a belief, and a hope or faith that makes it able to survive (Fredal, 2014, pp.73–97). More and more people, audiences, who believe in the truth of the hoax, hoax became popular culture. So, already know if lying to the hoax, but still, believe the truth of the hoax, that's where hoax become increasingly popular because it is liked by many people. The proof is that the various hoaxes produced *Postmetro.info* continues to spread and go viral.

Indeed, it is often distinguished between popular culture and mass culture. Popular culture is regarded as the spontaneous and original expression of the people. Meanwhile, the mass culture, as described by Strinati (Strinati, 2004, pp.5–9), is a culture as "a chaotic consequence of industrialization and urbanization". This mass culture also leads to "atomization" for the individuals within it. The question is whether all the things that are worthy and sold well are never separated from industrialization that presupposes the existence of standardized forms of expression and materialization? Is it true that various industrialization processes result in atomization, namely the occurrence of individuals who experience alienation? What happens to hoaxes, as popular culture, can unite, at least for the opponents of President Jokowi.

Thus, the totalitarian way of thinking presupposes uniformity to all elements of life and, even, the active individuals involved in it. What's more, popular culture is mass. It indicates that popular culture is the result of industrialization and urbanization. Through that popular culture, what has feared the emergence of atomization is never present. What is scattered is popular culture, which is also a form of mass culture, capable of integrating separate individuals and groups to engage in interactive engagement. It's just that, indeed, the sustainability of the interaction never lasts long because the characteristics of popular culture are favored in a relatively short span of time. Meanwhile, popular culture, on the other hand, is capable of attracting an abundance of enthusiasts. In such an understanding, hoaxes can be seen as popular cultural products.

In the concept of popular culture, as the culture favored by the masses, it becomes possible that this culture is used as the arena of hegemony (Storey, 2003, pp.48–60). The so-called hegemony, in this context, is not a dominance carried on from above in the dominant ideological form. Hegemony is not a liberal consensus that means different positions circulate in an equal plurality. Hegemony is a certain kind of consensus which is demonstrated by an active and ongoing struggle to win support through "moral and intellectual leadership" strategies for the sustainability of rules of the dominant class (Gramsci, 1992, p.57). Hegemony, by so doing, is surrounded by endless resistance.

Gramsci's point emphasizes three things: 1) hegemony is never frozen but always under negotiation between superior and subordinate social classes; 2) the hegemony of capitalist culture is unstable and may experience serious momentary crises; and, 3) the hegemony is rarely called into normality over a long

period. Thus, the hegemony shows how the ruling class leads. The opposition, meanwhile, is showing off its bubbling dissatisfaction but is successfully masked. As a result, the presence of radical media can be read in two different directions: as the need to establish counter-hegemony when power is at its peak or as a profound expression and a very disturbing feeling of mass dissatisfaction (Downing, 2001, pp.14–17).

But, in popular culture, too, opportunities for groups that have been marginalized can be expressed. Internet and digital technology, positioned as popular culture, is a medium that can be used to carry out such resistance, as *Postmetro.info* points out. The internet can be used as an option over other media, such as radio, newspapers, television, or movies. This is because the various types of mainstream media can be controlled by a handful of economic and political elites. As Baker (Baker, 2007, pp.97–98.) described, the internet was able to break the deadlock due to the power of concentration run by the mainstream media. What the internet can afford is "diversity, possibilities to be accessed, and give the ability to audiences". Through the internet, people can express their political aspirations in various ways, for example, creating blogs, encouraging various parties to sign an online petition, mobilizing opinions through social media, or simply conveying status or taste. In fact, even in improper ways, the hoax must also be seen as a form of political expression. Such a thing is a very good political channel in a democratic country because the media today is no longer controlled by a small handful of people only.

Of course, various moral reasons and sharp criticism can be put forward to *Postmetro.info* which continues to spread the hoaxes. But what the site has shown is that the various hoaxes that have been propagated have been the realization of specific resistance and have indeed attracted the attention of netizens and rulers. It all happened precisely when the hoax was criticized by a number of authorities, but at the same time, the hoax was able to be packed in a popular cultural formula. The resistance was possible, following Foucault's (Foucault, 1980, p.95.) statement, because there was an ongoing mastery. The resistance cannot be separated from the scope of the party in power. Thus, the resistance cannot be separated from the dominant narratives imposed by the authorities. Foucault's ideas show the linkage between values, power, and meaning in the perspective of political economy (Pereira, 2009, pp.325–330).

But, why hoax as resistance can happen? Following the ideas of Marx and Engels (1994, pp.196–197), that the ruling class by itself is also powerful. Classes that have material power at the same time are powerful intellectual powers. Classes that have material-producing devices by themselves control the mental production devices. Thus, it can be asserted that the ideas of a class lacking the mental production devices will be subject to those who possess these various mental production devices. Although the materialistic thought is too linear, it can explain why digital technology is able to provide many explanations about the various resistances that appear to the authorities through new media.

It is true that the new media undergoes commodification, as can be observed in the various hoaxes produced *Postmetro.info* cannot be separated from the motive for financial gain, which has consequences on how power is distributed through the material conditions of the system of capitalism. In the arena, the issues that can be highlighted are citizenship, democracy, government, and globalization. It's just that on the other hand it should also be understood that power is also attached to new media practices and affects how people's lives are mediated by the new media (Mansell, 2004, pp.96–105). The ruling party is still able to control the new media by arguing for law enforcement and public order. Yet, at the same time, the public remains able to be critical and continue to bombard the authorities in various ways, including the spread of hoaxes.

In fact, in the assessment of Kahn and Kellner (2006, pp.703–725.), since the beginning of the internet, the medium has been used by various groups to engage in oppositional politics. On a global scale, there is the phenomenon of hacktivism. This means that hackers who have been synonymous with criminal behavior, it turns out, are involved in various resistances against the rulers and corporations on a global scale. If read in the same tone, then it may be what is run by *Postmetro.info* is a kind of hacktivism in another way. What to demolish is news that has been established to be hijacked and appropriated according to their own interests. The disadvantaged groups, whether government or media institutions, must regard it as a harmful theft behavior, from the aspect of public order as well as financially. But *Postmetro.info* is proud that they have criticized the government very hard with provocative tones and the managers of this site are also enjoying this political war. *Postmetro.info* by spreading the hoax has felt challenged the dominant structure of power that creates and maintains marginalization conditions. This means that *Postmetro.info* managers assume that they have presented voices from the marginalized cultural and economic sectors (Pal & Dutta, 2008, pp.41–87). Of course, this if various hoaxes are viewed positively and optimistically.

That is, the internet or the digital world is a new geography that opens up a distinctive map for the participants in it. The digital space has proven to be a space of resistance. This means that the digital space is not fully capable of being controlled and privatized by state power or corporate control (Beck, 2016, pp.334–349.). The various forms of resistance, as the peasants do, are not praiseworthy. For example, it is

rolling slander, gossip, character destruction, harsh nicknames, gestures, and various silent actions that have been kept locked up in the backstage of life (Scott, 1985, p.xvii). That's what happened to *Postmetro.info*. This site has been closed several times by the government and several times changed the domain to survive. Of course, the reason is that this site is spreading a variety of hoaxes that overthrow the government and endlessly slander. But, it should also be understood that this is a form of digital resistance that is possible because of the technology that supports it. It's just that what is run *Postmetro.info* when viewed from the morality contrary to the ethics of journalism and the wishes of citizens who want good political tactics.

3 Conclusions

Various hoaxes that became phenomena since late 2016 are inseparable from the economic and political contexts that surround them. This paper describes *Postmetro.info*, one of the sites accused of being a hoax spreader, as a party who deliberately produces and spreads the various false news. This site is incorrect if it is positioned as an alternative medium. It is more appropriate to call an agent who deliberately pumps propaganda in a provocative fashion to attack the government. Achieving financial benefits cannot be separated from the motives of the managers of this site. This is seen when they make the various hoaxes go viral in the digital world. This site is indeed running resistance to the ruling party because of government hegemony is considered too strong.

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