Degrading Message and Hate Speech are Now Obligatory in Elections?
A Qualitative Research on Post-truth Populism in Sumatera Utara's Local Election

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Abstrak/*Abstract*

Komunikasi politik mutakhir sangat diwarnai oleh post-truth dan populisme. Hal tersebut amat terasa dalam Pemilihan Umum Amerika Serikat dan Gerakan Brexit. Pada level lokal, kedua elemen tersebut diyakini memainkan peran serius pada Pemilihan Kepala Daerah DKI (Pilkada) Jakarta 2017. Penelitian kualitatif ini mencoba melihat sebuah Pilkada lain, di provinsi terbesar penduduknya di luar Pulau Jawa, yaitu Sumatera Utara. Secara lebih khusus penelitian kualitatif ini ingin menelusuri bagaimana kalau lima garis keingintahuan para ilmuwan komunikasi (antara lain dikonsolidasi Waisbord, 2018) tentang pesan-pesan populisme, dikaitkan komunikasi politik pada suatu Pilkada. Penelitian ini merupakan aplikasi pertama garis riset Waisbord di Indonesia, dan aplikasi pertama pada tingkat Pilkada. Selain menemukan bahwa kelima garis riset yang dikonsolidasi Waisbord memang eksis pada Pilkada Sumatera Utara, penelitian ini juga memperlihatkan peran garis riset mana yang lebih dominan atau tampil lebih awal. Bahkan hal tersebut dirasakan berbagai pihak sebagai kewajiban atau kelaziman dalam Pilkada.

Contemporary political communication is heavily coloured by post-truth and populism phenomena. The 2016 US Presidential Election and Brexit Referendum in the United Kingdom showed their implications. In Indonesia, those phenomena were believed to play significant roles in the 2017 DKI Jakarta Gubernatorial Election. This qualitative research tries to explore another local election in Indonesia, i.e. in North Sumatera, the biggest province outside Java. Specifically, this research tries to examine how the five lines of inquiry related to post-Truth and populism (categorized among others by Waisbord, 2018) take place in Sumatera Utara's local elections. This research constitutes the first application of Waisbord's lines of inquiry in Indonesia, as well as at the local election level. It finds that all five lines inquiry exist in the North Sumatera's local elections. In addition, it also shows which line of inquiry becomes dominant or occurss earlier than others. Even most interviewees think that this dominant factor is now a kind of obligation and is ubiquitous in elections.

Kata kunci/*Keywords:*

Populisme, pasca-kebenaran, lima garis keingintahuan, komunikasi politik, Pemilu lokal

Populism, post-truth, five lines of inquiry, political communication, local election

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Political Communication and Populism

Major studies of political communication generally fall on the electoral issues or the determination of public attitudes, in addition to various efforts to socialize policies and political education. This is, of course, related to the context of the communication system or the influence of trends in a particular time and place. In international political communication, the United States General Election in 2018 making Donald Trump the elected president, as well as the

Brexit Referendum in 2016 resulting in the UK's exit from the European Union have given birth to many interesting analyzes. Many experts attribute these empirical events to populism, generating studies and analyzes around populism, democracy and communication in northern countries (Aalberg, Esser, Reinemann, Stromback, & De Vreese, 2016; Krämer, 2014).

Before booming through, among others, Trump and Brexit's victories, populism was more seen as a tradition of the Latin American region (Grigera, 2017). The first wave was called to appear in the 1930s post-war. Populism then had a political-ideological form of a group of political elites called "caudillo" (leaders), who communicated an effort to utilize available and uneducated mass. The personal side of the leader is more prominent than the institution. Charismatic leaders such as Peron (in Argentina, giving birth to "Peronism"), Vargas (Brazil) and Cardenas (Mexico) emerged. The 1990s saw the second-wave of populism, often called Neoliberal Populism. Its leaders are Menem (Argentina), Fujimori (Peru), and Collor de Mello (Brazil). They tried to combine populism with neoliberalism: a kind of combination of nationalist jargon plus promises of economic redistribution with the implementation of reforms based on the Washington Consensus. In the 2000s came the third wave of populism or Neopopulism; actually born as a reaction to the economic and political crisis against previous populism that began to implement a combination of Neoliberalism. Among others, the leaders are Kirchner (Argentina), Lula (Brazil), and Chaves (Venezuela). The issue of corruption by the elites and exploitation by the interests of capital owners and multi-national corporations always colors the three waves of Populisms.

When referred back to the initial form of communication from ideological politics, the differences between various names appear to be so thin; hence not too suitably accorded to the dichotomy of left-wing and right-wing populism (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). Although these terms are currently still used to address the adherents by themselves or others.

Populism can then be felt in various other societies and become a global trend through the emergence of Occupy Movement (Calhoun, 2013). This movement originally came from Occupy Wall Street, and spread to many countries, among others due to the global economic crisis in 2008 that created wider economic inequality at the global level. The famous movement with the slogan "we are the 99%" is not too dependent on charismatic leaders, yet can be suitably started by a group of people who later became popular. Some of the original movements were spontaneous and not necessarily like the vertical Latin American Populism. This movement can be horizontal. Of course, this is notably suitable with the presence of new media, especially social media.

For populism, truth is not unanimous/unified; it is shared, partial, and carrying elements of ideology. Even the truth is the result of construction by certain social actors, be it from the hegemonic power or the enemy of the state. The populists ridiculed the liberalist argument that truth is made objectively, impartially, and produced by institutions on the basis of consent. For populism, truth is made and comes from the people without going through representative mechanisms or by institutions, whether from political or media leaders, journalists, scientists, community organizations, and universities.

Harsin (2018:37) notes that some populism movements reserve a unique distrust for professional journalism (in contrast, entire newspapers in 19th century pre-professionalized journalism sponsored populism; see Goodwyn, 1976). From Hungary and Poland to France and the United Kingdom, right-wing populism is palpably anti-media and often also anti-expert/-science/- intellectual. Both Donald Trump and the German-based Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West refer to "the lying media" (Lügenpresse; Stier, Posch, Bleier, & Strohmaier, 2017). Trump and France's Le Front National also call unflattering news fake, while Phillipines' president Rodrigo Duterte routinely draws international coverage for insulting the press and just about everyone else (Wescott & Quiano, 2016).

Across multiple societies, according to Harsin (2015:327), we see a shift from regimes of truth (ROT) to "regimes of posttruth" (ROPT) characterized by proliferating "truth markets." ROT corresponded to disciplinary society, tighter functioning between media/political/education apparatuses, scientific discourses, and dominant truth-arbiters. ROPT corresponds to societies of control, where power exploits new "freedoms" to participate/produce/express (as well as consume/diffuse/evaluate). These developments further correspond to postpolitics/postdemocracy, where issues, discourses, and agency for sociopolitical change remain constrained, despite the enabling of a new range of cultural and pseudopolitical participation around, among other things, truth. ROPT emerge out of postpolitical/postdemocratic strategies common to control societies where especially resource rich political actors attempt to use data-analytic knowledge to manage the field of appearance and participation, via attention and affect.

Then Harsin (2018:37) sees post-truth as a periodizing concept, though often misleading in its popular usage. Post does not equal after. Yet, we are after a historical period where more people relied on and trusted the same truthtellers and when popular truth was more stable, a set of institutional and popular relationships Foucault called a "regime of truth". When effective, these inter-institutional relationships circulate their own truths and ensure they are integrated in everyday practices.

In the United States, during the 2008 presidential campaign, there was a statement circulated that Obama did not qualify as a president of the United States because he was not a native. In the United Kingdom, the Brexit movement culminated in a plebiscite, which said au revoir to the European Union. It was widely reported that the movement sailed to plebiscitary success on the wave of numerous false statements, or "rumor bombs" (Harsin, 2018; Kirk, 2017). In French, to analyze the right-wing movement La Manif Pour Tous and their campaign against what they call "gender theory in the schools", Harsin (2018) synthesizes fledgling theories of post-truth (associated with Donald Trump and Brexit) and theories of emotions in populism. After identifying their populist qualities, he analyzes the movement's five prominent post-truth qualities on Facebook: (a) fake people; (b) active distrust; (c) emotion; (d) rumor bombs; and (e) backlashes. Considering the conjunctural specificity of social trust and truth deficits, he proposes that post-truth and "rumor-bombing" aspects, simultaneous with their populist nature, are better understood as a kind of emotional truth or "emo-truth" in right-wing populist movements today. Finally, he proposes cases like this may point to a mainstreaming of post-truth populism.

Indonesian Election and Populism

Indonesian political communication prior to the 1998 Reform/Revolution has been colored by the phenomenon of populism, in the context of the Latin American version of the socio-economic-political gap, contributed by the inclusion of internet technology (see Hidayat, Gazali, Suwardi, Katopo, 2000). Subsequent to the fall of the New Order government and the start of preparations for the 1999 General Election, there were already several community groups and politicians using digital media. Among those who already had had adequate sites and developed political communication quite well with potential voters were the Justice Party, later transformed into the Prosperous Justice Party. In the 2004 and 2009 Presidential Elections, the internet was increasingly used as a means for reaching and communicating with voters.

In the context of the Regional or Local Elections (Pilkada), since its first implementation in Kutai Kartanegara (2005), it was only in 2012 in Jakarta Special Region Election that political communication significantly used the internet (Gazali, 2014). In the 2014 Presidential Election, political communication through social media entered a new phase, particularly due to the use of a 20 percent Presidential Threshold (from the number of parliamentary seats [DPR] obtained by parties or joint political parties) or 25 percent (from legislative national votes) in the DPR Parliamentary Elections held before the Presidential Election. As a result, only two candidate pairs namely Prabowo Subianto and Hatta Rajasa (Prabowo-Hatta) and Joko Widodo and Jusuf Kalla (Jokowi-JK) could proceed in the Presidential Election.

Obviously, the country became truly divided due to the use of social media containing false and slanderous news concerning the two camps competing in the presidential election. Our previous research shows two main issues used to attack Jokowi-JK. First, that Jokowi was of Chinese descendant. Second, that Jokowi was a descendant or even had been a member of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). There are also at least three main issues aimed at attacking the Prabowo-Hatta pair. First, that Prabowo had a psychopathic character. Second, Prabowo was a violator of human rights, especially in the context of kidnapping activists. Third, should Prabowo be in power, he would commit violence against Chinese ethnic groups.

In Indonesia, the picture of post-truth political communication got clearer in the events of the Jakarta Gubernatorial Election in 2017. This election brought together Basuki "Ahok" Tjahaja Purnama and Djarot Syaiful Hidayat facing Agus Yudhoyono Harimurti and Silvyana Murni, and Anies Baswedan and Sandiaga Uno. Ahok was the incumbent, rising to become governor after the position was called off by Joko Widodo, who proceeded to the 2014 Presidential Election. 2017 Jakarta Gubernational Election had to take two rounds because no single pair gets fifty percent plus one vote, as required by the law of capital city specificity. In the deciding round, Ahok-Djarot had competed against Anies-Sandiaga. This seems like a continuation of the 2014 Presidential Election, where again there were two camp battles; one of which was a pair of Chinese descent, a Christian representative and a Moslem deputy.

Some post-truth approaches, among others, can be seen from the effort to spread pamphlets with the picture of Anies, captioned with the words "Welcoming the Muslim Governor—Stopping the Infidel Governor—Establishing Jakarta under Sharia". The message to be conveyed was of course Jakarta should be under sharia if Anies Baswedan won. This provoked voters to reconsider again before choosing Anies-Sandi. Fabricated posters were also spread, saying: "Should Anies Baswedan lose the election, there shall be an Islamic Revolution" with provocative images of men in white clothes holding swords. Similar approaches also occurred in the Ahok-Djarot camp. For example, the photo of Ahok shaking hands with King Salman was deemed false since it would be impossible and unlawful for the king of the Islamic kingdom of Saudi Arabia to shake hands with a person debasing Islam.

Of course, the 2017 Jakarta Election cannot be separated from the marches or subsequent demonstrations against Ahok, which was driven by the GNPF MUI (National Movement of Indonesian Ulema Council/MUI's Doctrine Defenders) and various other Islamic groups or organizations. Particularly the November 4, 2016

March (known as "411 Rally") and December 12, 2016 March (famous as "212 Rally", the biggest demonstration in Indonesian history), as well as a series of marches increasingly shrinking in mass. The essence of all these actions was the demand that the then Jakarta governor Ahok, who was preparing for a reelection, was immediately prosecuted and sentenced for considerably insulting Islam. This is related to Ahok's statement on the Thousand Islands on September 27, 2016. Various researchers state what Ahok did or what he was accused of is more of a public frustration over political-economic inequality in Indonesia, which got worse due to Ahok's statement that can be interpreted in various directions. Ahok's communication style, which tends to be angry, frontal, and seemingly insulting to those he considered wrong or against his way of thinking, also exacerbated public sentiment.

Lim (2017) notes that following the 411 and 212 Rallies, observers and pundits quickly framed the Pilkada as a contest between democratic and undemocratic forces. Some saw it as a battle between liberal and Islamic fundamentalist values. Others remarked that the Pilkada, including its social media campaigns, embodied a war between rational voters and racist-sectarian voters. Some blamed social media for the dissemination of fake news, as well as sectarian, racist, anti-Christian, and anti-Chinese messages that had emboldened the anti-Ahok movement.

There is no doubt, according to Lim, that sectarianism and racism played significant roles in the election, and social media was heavily utilized in the campaign against Ahok. However, it is misleading to frame this in a binary perspective such as democratic versus undemocratic forces, pluralism versus sectarianism, or rational versus racist voters. Using the Pilkada case as an empirical example, Lim demonstrates that such a simplified binary approach only superficially reveals the dynamics of social media utilization in politics. The relationship between social media and electoral politics is complex and marked by the emergence of "algorithmic enclaves" and the rise of tribal nationalism.

Lim (12-13) describes "algorithmic enclaves" as the formations formed whenever a group of individuals, facilitated by their constant interactions with algorithms, attempts to create a (perceived) shared identity online to defend their beliefs and protect their resources from both real and perceived threats. These enclaves are a type of "imagined community" (Anderson, 1991), that is techno-socially constructed. The algorithm itself does not predetermine the formation of enclaves. Users and algorithms mutually shape each other in sorting, classifying, and hierarchizing people, information, and political preferences. The partitioned environment of algorithmic enclaves is dynamic, not static; clusters shift in size and membership over time. Within these enclaves, small-scale online deliberation takes place, furthering consensus among members and amplifying any pre-existing sentiments, beliefs, and opinions they share. It is not the information per se that facilitates amplification processes, but rather the sharing and discussion of the information within the enclave, whether negatively or positively, that correlates with their pre-existing opinions.

Judging from the creation process, the definition of "algorithmic enclaves" seems to have similarities with post-truth or emo-truth populism according to Harsin (2015, 2018).

North Sumatera Regional Election

There are at least six considerations as to why the North Sumatra regional election became a notably interesting area outside Jakarta to study in the context of post-truth populism. *First*, this is the largest province outside Java. North Sumatra has a population of 13,937,797, the fourth largest after West Java, Central Java, and East Java. The number of voters in North Sumatra for 2018 regional election was 9,052,529. *Second*, the number of internet users in North Sumatra is the second largest in Indonesia, comprising 19.09 percent of the overall voters, after the island of Java with 57.70 percent. *Third*, North Sumatra has ethnic and religious diversities, comparable to those in Jakarta. There are ethnicities of Batak (41.95 percent), Javanese (32.62 percent), Nias (6.36 percent), Malay (4.92 percent), Chinese (3.07 percent), Minangkabau (2.66 percent), Banjar (0.97 percent), and others (7.45 percent). In regard to religions, Muslims are the majority at 63.91 percent, Protestants at 27.86 percent, Catholics at 5.41 percent, Buddhists at 2.43 percent, Hindus at 0.35 percent, Confucians at 0.102 percent, and other religions at 0.01 percent. *Fourth*, North Sumatra has a unique record with corruption. Not only the number of corruption cases has increased in the last three years (from 12 cases in 2015, to 14 cases in 2016, and 33 cases in 2017), there had also been eight officials, specifically governors, mayors, and regents, and dozens of members of the local parliament who were caught in corruption cases prior to the 2018 regional election. We have to note that Latin American populism also emerged as a serious reaction to corruption. *Fifth*, referring to the research results of the Elections Supervisory Body (Bawaslu), North Sumatra Pilkada, along with other four Pilkadas, was considered as vulnerable by the Ministry of Home Affairs. According to Bawaslu, this vulnerability was measured from various variables, such as geographical challenges, violence against voters, conflicts between participants, neutrality of organizers, legal cases, and so forth. In addition, the Ministry of Home Affairs emphasized the presence of only two candidate pairs that tend to cause high fanaticism, as also happened in the 2014 Presidential Election. *Sixth*, in terms of candidates, there was Djarot Syaifullah Yusuf, Ahok's deputy during

his term as Jakarta governor, competed as a candidate for governor.

In the beginning, Tengku Ery Nuradi became the first person to declare himself as a candidate for governor (November 2, 2017). He had been initially the deputy governor of North Sumatra, and then he was appointed as the governor for the former governor was involved in corruption cases. Suddenly his own party, National Democrats, switched their support to Edy Rahmayadi, Commander of Kostrad (Army Strategic Command) on January 5, 2018. Edy Rahmayadi first registered with the Hanura Party in August 2017. Then the Gerindra Party, the National Mandate Party (PAN), and the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) expressed their support for Edy Rahmayadi in December 2017. When registering to the KPUD (the Regional or Local Election Commission), there were 10 parties supporting the pair acronymed as "Eramas", with both candidates came from an Islamic background. On January 5, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) also submitted Djarot Syaiful Hidayat as a gubernatorial candidate paired with Sihar Sitorus, supported by the United Development Party (PPP), the Indonesian Justice and Unity Party (PKPI), and the Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI). This combination of Islam-Protestant Christianity was then acronymed "Djoss".

The fate of the third pair, JR Saragih and Ance Selian, was not less interesting. They got supports from their respective parties, namely the Democratic Party and the National Awakening Party (PKB). Their candidacy was declared on January 7, 2018. This pair was a combination of Catholic-Islam. Unexpectedly JR Saragih was disqualified by the KPUD, deemed not to fulfill the requirement for a legalized diploma. The Integrated Law Enforcement Center Team then set JR Saragih as a suspect (on March 15, 2018) for allegedly using fake documents in the registration of the gubernatorial candidate pair. At the same time, rumors were circulated that intelligence and high rank officials were conducting covert operations so that North Sumatra had only two candidates for governor and deputy governor, with the aim that the voices of Christian and Catholic groups were not divided. The issues, truly close to Populism resistance, were then justified; it turned out that after JR Saragih resigned, he quickly pledged his support to the Djoss couple, and then his case was never heard again. On the other hand, this at once also forms the new landscape of North Sumatra's Pilkada into two very clear camps, i.e. the Eramas Islam-Islam pair against a single opponent, the Djoss Islam-Protestant Christian pair that now also gained support from the withdrawn Catholic-Muslim pair. The Democratic Party itself finally expressed support for the Eramas pair.

The North Sumatra Regional Election vote, included in the third wave of simultaneous local elections, was held on June 27, 2018. The recapitulation of the final results was carried out on 8 July 2018 with the Eramas getting 3,291,137 votes or 57.6 percent of 5,716,097 valid votes, while the Djoss pair obtained 2,424. 960 votes or 42.4 percent of the votes.

Such demographic and psychographic background (also resembles DKI Jakarta Election) clearly provides a breeding ground for post-truth populism. Waisbord (2018) tries to consolidate various research by communication scientists on populism, communication, and democracy to reach the five lines of research relevant to the process of growing populism, i.e.: (1) the appeal of populist messages on political and ideological attitudes; (2) the personality-centered and conflict-driven news; (3) the vision of politics as neatly divided between "the people" and "the elite"; (4) the major changes in contemporary media ecologies such as fragmentation and multilayered gatekeeping; and (5) the social media and digital mobilization that are conducive to populist styles of communication.

Research Questions

This qualitative research analyzes the 2018 North Sumatra Pilkada based on the five research lines that Waisbord consolidated, and asked whether all the elements of post-truth-populism within the five lines of research existed in the 2018 North Sumatra Regional Election. This study also attempts to give a qualitative picture concerning which elements of post-truth populism emerged relatively early or more dominant in North Sumatra 2018 election and how they relate to the typical post-truth populism elements in the area.

Methodology

The research adopts the qualitative, grounded approach that relies primarily on observation, records of statements made in private and public meetings, as well as personal interviews. The author has been involved in social movements with activists in Indonesia since 1992, and began to closely observe the use of social media in the days preceding the first and the second episode of Gecko versus Crocodile (the clash between the Corruption Eradication Commission [KPK] and the National Police), the 2014 Presidential Election, and various local elections, including the 2017 DKI Jakarta Gubernatorial Election. The author then drew up all the concepts that need to be examined and outlined the research questions.

These initial research procedures are similar to those used by other scholars who researched the Indonesian media landscape (d'Haenens et al., 1999:139). These procedures include the following:

A list of concepts was drawn up to be used as a guide by the researcher during the inter-

views. All concepts needed to be dealt with. The order in which this was done as well as the actual questions to be asked were less important, and depended on the interviewee, the orientation and content of each answer. Underlying relationships between the concepts were sought, in order to come up with a clear understanding of the connections and interrelations among all concepts/categories. Based on these concepts, the goal was to elucidate the various answers of all the communicators interviewed, in order to establish a measured classification of the various categories.

The interviews were conducted from March to July, 2018. Researchers selected a number of speakers from the Social Media Teams of both Eramas' and Djoss' camps, as well as researchers at local universities and key figures in the community, including a number of voters, based on the key information sought. In other words, the results of the first phase will determine the following phase. In general, interviews took place more than once, both face-to-face, through telephone lines, e-mail, and other means of communication. Almost all of the interviewees were sources who were indeed reliable in their respective fields. They are chosen based on their relevance to the social media situation in the democratic life in Indonesia. Some of them are influential figures in the field under study. As is usually the case, place constraints are not a problem for social media, so some of them are not domiciled in North Sumatra.

The aim of the interviews was to get to know the interviewees, to probe into their reality: what meaning did the interviewees give to the journey in their everyday life? In order to do this, the researcher had to be able to place themselves "in the shoes" of the interviewees, thereby gaining an understanding of the latter's thought processes. The paradigm used as a point of departure is "working with the people", based upon so-called "comprehensive people participation" (Cohen and Uphoff, 1980). By "people participation", it means participation in assessing, decision-making, implementing, sharing the benefits, and in evaluating. Therefore, every session began with exploring the actors' assessment of all relevant issues (i.e., starting from their access to and use of existing social media). In other words, it starts with their closest environment. This procedure is very much in line with the spirit of the grounded research approach. This approach allows the researchers to reconstruct the interviewees' perspective (Glaser and Strauss, 1967 & 2017; Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Finding 1: Contributions of Social Media and Digital Mobilization

Out of the five research lines that Waisbord consolidated, it was the fifth line, namely the role or support of digital media and social media to-wards the birth of post-truth populism messages, which first emerged prior to the North Sumatra local election. Clearly, this is closely related to the increasing number of social media users in Indonesia.

The data recorded by Lim (2017) states that there are 132.7 million internet users in Indonesia, and 92 million of them use social media. 106 million Facebook users were also recorded. Similarly, a study conducted by We Are Social in collaboration with Hootsuite launched on January 30, 2018 shows that from Indonesia's total population of 265.4 million, its active social media users have now reached 130 million. As many as 120 million Indonesians use mobile devices to access social media. Facebook visitors have now reached more than 1 billion per month.

In the most widely accessed social media survey in Indonesia based on user claims, YouTube ranked first with a percentage of 43 percent. As many as 41 percent of Indonesian social media users claimed to often use Facebook, 40 percent often used WhatsApp, and 38 percent claimed to often access Instagram, while users claiming to frequently access Line were 33 percent.

The parallel is seen in the North Sumatra Pilkada. At least 150 social media accounts were found consistently associated with the Djoss camp and around 120 social media accounts were associated consistently with the Eramas camp. Most of the types of the accounts, according to the order widely used, were Facebook (with Fanpage) accounts, Instagram accounts, WhatsApp Groups, and Twitter accounts. The use of YouTube was not significantly notable at the beginning, yet it grew somewhat in the days leading up to the voting day. YouTube was particularly used to to upload debates between candidates as well as several grand campaigns for public consumption as ultimate weapons.

The leaders of social media teams in both camps were generally not exposed to the public. Moreover, with the advantages of social media, the conveyors or senders of the message may come from anywhere in the world. In the 2016 US presidential election, some false news for Trump and his camp was actually emerged from the city of Veles, Macedonia.

All social media teams from both Djoss and Eramas camps stated that they had a special unit that handled hate speech. Their main intention, however, was to exercise control or some kind of counterattack (or "backlash" as one of the qualities of Harsin's post-truth populism). Both camps were very confident that their competitors had specialized units to do what was called attempts of "degrading" the opponent. In fact, on many occasions, our research team met with various consultants employed in several Pilkada in Indonesia in the past ten years, and almost all consultants admitted that they prepared such a team called Team of Degrading the Opponents. In addition to preemptive measures or counter-

attack, many consultants offer prospective clients to employ the team specializing in degrading their opponent as part of a package deal of the consultants' service. During the bargaining process, the consultants always managed to convince the clients by providing samples and explanations of the context and the situation as well as the time and place of the elections in which they sucessfully made their clients a winner.

Political communication researcher at the University of North Sumatra, Hendra Harahap, on one occasion gave a preliminary picture that Djoss team seemed more enthusiastic in organizing social media, mainly in an effort to gain support from the Javanese ethnic population and various key clan figures among the Batak ethnic group. The Eramas team then followed the arrangement of social media team, also concentrating on Javanese, Malay, Minang ethnic groups, and began their operation among Muslims. In the initial stages until the second debate approaching, according to this researcher, the atmosphere could still be considered as "warm" yet not as cruel as in the Jakarta regional election.

The Eramas team had a difficulty in tidying up the social media work between two local teams in North Sumatra and with a team from Jakarta who later joined to organize the WhatsApp Group Portal of Eramas. This group then became one of the platforms for discussion of all social media strategies. Subsequent to re-consolidating, the Eramas team then decided to focus more on handling Javanese, Malay, Minang ethnic groups, as well as Muslim group in general. The main reason was the strategic period of Ramadan and Eid al Fitr in 2018, which indeed occured days before the final debate and voting time.

Both camps' social media teams had anticipated an imminent attack on the gubernatorial and deputy governor candidate pairs and against the success team in general. One of the highlights in the North Sumatra Pilkada was that the types of memes circulated among the public were far more calculated; they were able to attract immediate attention from the public due to their humorous nature and easily circulated everywhere. Even with a simple editing or montage editing technique, these memes were capable of presenting images and messages that conveyed considerable hate speech.

Finding 2: The Conflict-Seeking News Centered on Personality

Gradually, as the official campaign period progresses, the five elements of Harsin's post-truth populism (fake people; active distrust; emotion; rumor bombs; backlashes) began to appear in the North Sumatra Pilkada. While in regard to Waisbord's research lines, was the emergence of news or conflict issues centered on personality immediately occurred.

At least four hundred more memes were found and analyzed in almost all social media plat-

forms. All elements of Harsin's post-truth populism were found. Two examples of memes that represent conflicts centered on personality are shown in the following.

The picture above is a counterattack measure, since it clearly states that it is a "HOAX Photo". The picture in the left was edited so that it appeared as if the gubernatorial candidate Djarot and his running mate were attending a traditional event where a pig's head, which is considered as haram by Muslims, was served as the main course. The picture's creator's intention was, among others, to spread mistrust towards Djarot and depict him as "Islam KTP", a deragotary term which refers to Muslims whose faith is shallow and meaningless. A portion of the Eramas Team believed that such depiction could have easily spread, especially as Djarot had not been aware that he was being photographed and the photos were circulated. Nevertheless, looking at how Djarot and his running mate posed, this picture appears to be false news. Even though the people in the picture were indeed Djarot and his running mate, the context and real situation were altered. Nevertheless, both camps' social media teams do not acknowledge the photo circulation as part of their work.

A picture of gubernatorial candidate Edy Rahmayadi having a meeting with Christian leaders and attending Christian prayer was also circulated. The photo depicts Edy's solemn expression as if he was deep in the prayer, coupled with a provocative writing stating, "How could a true Muslim join in prayers of other religion???" Eramas' social media team admitted that the photo was true and the event did occur. They nevertheless clearly stated that the context of the situation was twisted. Edy did not think that he would be depicted in such a way, let alone being photographed and then spread on social media with provocative message.

The attack on Edy's and his running mate Musa Rajekshah's personal traits continued as they were alleged of being involved in bribery cases with a number of North Sumatra DPRD (Regional House of Parliament) members. Indeed, Musa had been previously summoned by the Corruption Eradication Commission as a witness to the bribery cases. However, the circu-

lated false news stated that the commission had named Musa as a suspect.

Meanwhile, Edy Rahmayadi also received personal attack. His physical appearance, which looks stronger than his competitors', was targeted; approaching the third debate, Edy was rumored to have Bell's Palsy, a disease attacking the facial muscles of the sufferers if, among others, they are heavily exposed to air conditioners. Soon there were many memes spreading rumors that Edy had a stroke.

Finding 3: Conflicting People and the Elites

The third research line of Waisboard which was found is the contention between the people and the elite, in which candidates were always positioned as elites. Edy Rahmayadi was most frequently depicted on YouTube videos in various situations where he appeared angry with disposessed people in front of the North Sumatra DPRD Building in 2015. At that time, Edy was serving as the Commander of the Bukit Barisan Regional Army, while the residents of Ramunia Deli Serdang were dispossesed from their land since it was taken by the military through Puskopad (Army Cooperation Center).

The disputed land and houses of the residents in Ramunia 1 village were initially owned by the state, and since early1960s, the land had been under Puskopad's control. Since it was left unused by Puskopad, the residents turned the land into agricultural land and built their houses there. Even Acehnese refugees also took advantage of the land. However, Puskopad began utilizing the land again in 2010, yet around 500 hectares of the land had been turned into arable land and residents' settlements. Since then, the conflict between citizens and Puskopad has been unavoidable. Edy ordered the residents to disband and also asked them to show proof of their ownership of the land.

The deputy gubernatorial candidate Sihar Sitorus was also heavily attacked by memes concerning the dispute between the state and the public over land ownership. The case began when a company owned by DL Sitorus, Sihar Sitorus' father, converted 72,000 hectares (of 172,000 hectares) of forest in Register 40 into oil palm plantations in Simangambat Sub-district, South Tapanuli District, which caused him being sentenced to 8 years in prison in mid 2006. In a cassation decision on February 12, 2007, the Supreme Court also ordered the 47,000 hectares of DL Sitorus' oil palm plantations to be confiscated by the state.

Since 2008, the Attorney General's Office has tried to confiscate the land and transfer the ownership to the Ministry of Forestry. Nevertheless, it is proven to be very difficult. Thus, to date, the land is considered illegally controlled or robbed by Sihar Sitorus following his father's death. There was also an accusation that the money obtained from the plantation, often claimed as leitimately the people's money, was used to finance Djoss' electoral campaign.

The two memes shown below represent the third element of post-truth populism. The governor candidate Djarot was often described as an elite who easily obtained an electronic Identity Card (KTP) in merely two days even without the required approval of the local camat (subdistrict head). Whereas in North Sumatra, or even in the whole Indonesia, numerous people often have to queue for years to receive their electronic ID cards. Such attack on Djarot was used to illustrate how the cumbersome bureaucratic process of obtaining a KTP hurt the ordinary people. Even though in their campaign Djarot and his running mate coined a campaign motto inspired by the acronym of North Sumatra (SUMUT) "All Is Easy and Transparent/*Semua Urusan MUdah dan Transparan*", as opposed to the old acronym "All Must Be Paid in Cash/*Semua Urusan harus Memakai Uang Tunai*".

In the meme below, a picture of Djarot is edited so that it appears as if he uses sunglasses, an attribute that is associated with local mafias.

Another meme mocking an incident which occurred during the second debate, where the governor candidate Edy was unable to answer a question posed by Djarot about how to deal with stunting in North Sumatra. Edy, with his military-like straightforward attitude, ignored the techniques of debate and immediately stated that he did not know what "stunting" was. After Djarot explained what the word meant, the delay of growth of toddler and children due to malnutrition, Edy proceeded to explain his health program to pick up the ball to the public. However, the meme below quickly takes advantage of Edy's ignorance about stunting, claiming that Edy would provide hearses for those who died because of malnutrition. This meme depicts Edy as an elite who does not understand the suffering of the people.

Finding 4: The Appeal of Political and Ideological Attitude

After the second debate held by the Regional Election Commission and the continuing occurrences of post-truth populism phases, which essentially required both camps to discuss and address each other's programs and opinions, the atmosphere of differentiation and attack on political and ideological attitudes began to appear more. Some memes attempted to raise public response by spreading allegations that Edy and Musa made deals with national and North Sumatra chapter of GNPF MUI (National Movement of Indonesian Ulema Council's Doctrine Defenders). The purpose of this message was to prompt widespread rejection against GNPF MUI in North Sumatra.

GNPF MUI is a movement widely known as the mastermind behind the 411 and 212 raalies

in Jakarta. Action 212, took place on December 2, 2016, was the biggest demonstration in Indonesian history, with seven million people claimed attended the rally to demand the then Jakarta Governor Ahok to be prosecuted for insulting Islam, specifically debasing the Al-Maidah verse 51.

Regarding Djarot - Sihar camp, there were a number of memes displaying a picture of Djarot's with a caption, "How could this person do *jihad* (struggle) to advance North Sumatra, while he himself was a friend of the debaucher of Islam?"

In the midst of competition imbued with post-truth populism, on May 13 and 14, 2018 a series of bombings took place in Surabaya and Sidoarjo, killing 21 citizens and 13 perpetrators. This incident was truly horrendous for Indonesia, since they successively took place within 25 hours, conducted by at least four families. It was the first familial-suicide-bomb terror in time in Indonesia, as well as in the world, generally speaking.

Following the terror, one of the statements circulating on a Facebook page associated as a supporter of Djoss stated, "The religion of ERAMAS is similar to the religion of TERORRISTS, barbaric and inhuman".
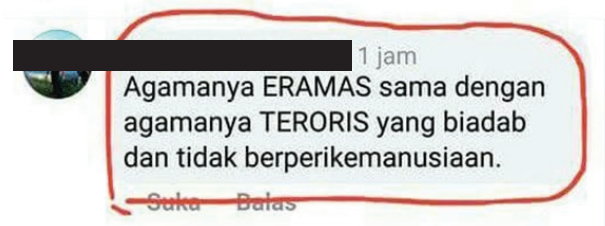
Statements like this must have been intended to strengthen cohesiveness among Djoss supporters, especially adherents of certain religions. Yet, apparently, this statement not only circulated on Facebook pages among Djoss supporters. It was widely circulated among Eramas supporters as well. Inevitably, an idea to use this issue as an "Insult to Islam", in the context similar to Ahok's case in Jakarta, appeared. Nevertheless, it did not succeed in becoming a large mass movement in North Sumatra.

Although it did not succeed in giving birth to a movement as major as 411 or 212 Rallies, efforts and appeal to show certain political and ideological attitudes became increasingly apparent through memes circulated on social media. In addition, at least in a number of places of worship of various religions, this statement was very much discussed.

One of the professors from Jakarta, Paiman Rahardjo, who had an intense discussion with Djarot, once heard a clear statement from a *khotib* (preacher) during Friday prayers at a random mosque in Medan. The preacher said that Muslims should not choose leaders, either gubernatorial candidates or vice governor candidates, of different religions; and if Muslim voters did so,

then the voters, along with their descendants, would go to hell.

According to some sources of this qualitative study, such discussion or suggestion also occurred in several other places of worship. Yet, from what they heard, the statements were not that strict or sharp. BPS' (Central Bureau of Statistics) data on North Sumatra in 2017 shows that this province has 10,834 mosques, 6,235 small mosques or musholla, 12,374 Protestant churches, 2,138 Catholic churches, 83 temples, 28 monasteries, and 367 pagodas.

The attraction of other political attitudes, beyond those directed at religious issues, also existed, particularly on the issue of whether the gubernatorial and vice-governor candidates were locals of the region where they competed for, whether they had relatively lived permanently in North Sumatra, or whether they migrated to North Sumatra from other region. This type of rhetoric benefited candidate Musa Rajekshah, who lived and built his career career in North Sumatra. Governor candidate Edy, who was born in Aceh and lived in North Sumatra before he pursued his education and military career, was also benefited by this rhetoric, particularly as he served as the Commander of the Military Region in North Sumatra.

On the other hand, candidate Sihar was often targeted by this rhetoric since even though he was born and raised in North Sumatera, he rarely resided in North Sumatra and often left North Sumatra for a long period for his education or business. Compared to Sihar, though, it was candidate Djarot who was primarily attacked by the rhetoric, depicted as a migrant in North Sumatra and associated with his work in Jakarta and close ties with Ahok, the debaucher of Islam.

Finding 5: Multi-layered Fragmentation and Selection

Facebook's statements which compared Eramas with terrorists' barbaric and inhumane religion can illustrate how multiple-layered fragmentation and selection form different attitudes towards the purpose of the attack. Djoss' social media team clearly stated that it was the personal attitude of the statement maker which did not reflect the attitude of Djoss' social media team or the overall campaign team. In fact, they did not acknowledge any affiliations between their team and the owner of the Facebook account. Some actually referred the Facebook account as one of the post-truth populism's aspects, namely "fake people" that might be deliberately created by other camps.

Djoss' social media team also attempted in such a way to discourage North Sumatra residents from spreading such statements on their social media accounts. Of course, the team refused to apologize since by doing so, they indirectly admitted that it was affiliated with the Facebook account. May Pelita, one of Djoss' campaign team's members, stated that the team was genuinely concerned about statements containing hate speech. He believed in a true democracy, where voters, including the ones in North Sumatra, are intelligent and responsible. He expected voters to filter hate speech wisely.

On the other hand, Devia, one of the campaign drivers of the Eramas' social media team, felt that this kind of political statement needed to be passed on to all Eramas' supporters in order to synergize the voters. With his team, however, he always reminded all Eramas' supporters not to arrange any violent conducts in expressing their protest over the statement. Some Eramas supporters refused to do so, instilling a long, heated discussion on various Facebook or WhatsApp groups joined by Eramas' supporters. Yet, Devia suggested the angry supporters to report the statement to the Elections Supervisory Body (Bawaslu) and the police. This suggestion was indeed followed, and the statement's maker was reported to the Election Supervisory Body and the police, but then no further action was taken by the authorities.

In preparing the Djoss and Eramas pairs for the debate, different layers of fragmentation and selection were also felt. Basically, both success teams recommended the two pairs to appear confident and end the debate with sharp and strong remark. The Djoss pair seemed to follow this direction very well; they smiled a lot while throwing various arguments with a clear concept against the opposition.

The Eramas pair was also asked to take a firm stance in the debate, considering that a survey on voters showed that Eramass's electability decreased because they did not appear to be firm and brave enough in the previous debates. Edy and Musa, however, only uttered a few strong remarks in the opening as well as closing session of the debate, remarks that were awaited by the Eramas' social media team. Among others, in their closing remark, by referring to the statement circulated on Facebook that insulted his religion, Edy stated that he "will rule by upholding the Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. We will protect all ethnicities, religions, and races, as well as any background in North Sumatra. Yet, we will not let our religion be insulted." Edy's closing remark was perceived by voters, especially Muslims, as a prove that Eramas pair were firm and ready to defend Muslims.

What is also interesting, in regard to the fifth research line found in the North Sumatra regional election, is the process of how the social media teams selectively cut parts of the debate and then upload them to various social media platforms. All of edited montage videos certainly aim to show the charming personality of candidates and their ideas which contradict the opposition's ideas. Djoss' camp continued to emphasize Djarot's impressive track record, focusing on his ex-

perience in Jakarta, through his answers and statements throughout the debate. Meanwhile, Eramas' camp strongly highlighted the strong opening and closing remarks of Edy. But the selection of parts of the debate uploaded by each team turned out to be uniquely diverse.

What should not be forgotten is the process of fragmentation and selection carried out by the recipients of these post-truth populism messages. To BBC media (2018), Feby Grace Hutajulu, a communication science practitioner from Medan who has been active in various social activities in the city, stated that despite the fact that there were contradicting facts on the field and on social media, people in North Sumatra were not as extreme as in Jakarta in terms of racial or religious conflicts. People do not acknowledge openly if their vote is purely based on the religion or ethnicity of the candidates. Thus, even though the community may be divided, they did not display the division openly.

Political communication expert from the University of North Sumatra, Safrin, supported this argument. He argued that the public "continues to get messages that likely divide them, some are based on certain ethnicities or religions. Yet, it is rather unique in North Sumatra. The public continues to process the message, over and over again, and does not want to show it to others or the media too much." Thus, the formation process of post truth and its algorithmic enclaves seems different with what occurred in Jakarta Regional Election, or it may be that the people of North Sumatra have learned and refused to be like the Jakarta Regional Election.

Discussion and Conclusion

This qualitative study mainly finds that the five lines of research that Waisbord consolidated on populist processes exist in the North Sumatra Regional Election. The findings also present the connection between the existence of the five lines of research to the quality of post-truth populism proposed by Harsin. This is the first study applying the five lines of Waisbord research to an electoral process in Indonesia, specifically to regional election.

From the findings, it can be concluded that the role of tools and drivers of digital and social media appeared early in the election process and encouraged all other qualities. In general, the drivers always said that they only exercised control or some kind of counterattack. But, on many ocassions, our research team met with various consultants employed in several Pilkada in Indonesia in the past ten years, and almost all consultants admitted that they preapared such a team called Team of Degrading the Opponents. This team is specifically assigned to demean the client's opponent, primarily through hate speech. United States presidential candidate Donald Trump specifically brought Nigel Farage, a successful figure behind the Brexit movement, to strengthen Trump's campaign of victory which was marked by a post-truth strategy.

The process and elements of conflict generation, based on the candidates' personality and contrasting the candidates (as elites) with the voters (as the ordinary people) were also very visible in the North Sumatra Regional Election. This aimed to spread distrust and strong emotions among voters towards candidates. The entire social media platfor, mainly Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube, were utilized. The most commonly chosen forms were social memes due to their potential in creating funny, though sometimes can be cruel, depictions of candidates and attracting public attention. Moreover, memes are easier to spread. Some fake accounts, for instance, exist to exclusively post and spread memes.

Although from the beginning all candidates and their social media teams affirmed their promise not to employ post-truth starteiges, as the campaign progressed, in reality they all gradually adopted Harsin's post-truth populism.

Slowly, statements conveying particular political and ideological attitudes became more evident and divided the voters of North Sumatra. Since the voters were in different locations, times, and socio-political environments, as well as came from different ethnicities and religious backgrounds, they encountered a process of fragmentation and did different multi-layered selections. This was clearly evident in the circulation process of social media messages; which ones should be spread or which ones were inappropriate to circulate.

From the perspective of Harsin's post-truth populism and Lim's algorithmic enclaves, that is an interaction process that is repetitive, time consuming, and born from gradual acceptance (including also parts that may be rejected), then the outcomes of post-truth populism in North Sumatra turned out to be different from the outcomes of post-truth populism in the Jakarta Regional Election. Local wisdom or local experience is perhaps a differentiating factor, according to political communication experts or scientists and community leaders in North Sumatra. Therefore, the results of this study is a promising start. Of course, it has a heuristic value to be continued in the research on various political communication events, especially on national and local elections. For example, further research on whether subsequent to Jakarta and North Sumatra Regional Elections other regional elections in the future will also employ post-truth populist strategy. Likewise, a research on the 2019 presidential election and whether it will be imbued by populism and post-truth phenomena can also be conducted. Will the intensity of the election intensify, considering that there will be only two presidential candidates who already faced agaisnt each other in the previous 2014 Presidential Election?

Fore and foremost, a comparative study at

the inter-nation level is also promising. For example, a research which compares the details of the Indonesian presidential election with the presidential election in the United States from which Trump emerged as the winner or with the victory of the Brexit Referendum in Britain, the two phenomena that are always mentioned when discussing the rise of post-truth and populism in political communication. This research can study in-depth whether 2016 populism was indeed in line with the local wisdom, beliefs, and habits that re-rise in a particular context and time or whether the localities were replaced by new perceptions which took form as an imagined community due to the techno-social dynamics that were in line with the five research lines.

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