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### Social Media and Moral Movement: A Critique of Jürgen Habermas' Communicative Actions Theory

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**Abstract**  
This paper examines a conflict of interest case between Polri and KPK in handling corruption cases "SIM simulator" that occurred in 2012. Anti-corruption activists and the Commission were the bearers of a great narrative in realizing the act of communication. But the impetus for cultural reproduction narrative was hampered by "legal violence" committed by the police institution. Lifeworld is the world of KPK and anti-corruption activists which is the interaction between the actors for cultural reproduction. In Habermas' view, lifeworld moves evolutionarily to achieve the following social integration and system integration. But, through social media, the transformation of lifeworld runs quickly, because social media is borderless and timeless. In this way, to accelerate the formation of opinions and moral movement to change or emancipation, the Police-Anti-Corruption Commission dispute case has become a model of how to make transformation and emancipation in society towards communication.

**Keywords:** communicative action, lifeworld, systems, social media, transformation

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#### 1. Background

Hegemony with a set of dominations imposed by it will bring forth the resistance against the hegemonic power, and resistance emerges when colliding with the use of compulsive power. Case Polri vs Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi (KPK) (Corruption Eradication Commission, thereafter called Commission), occurring in 2012, reflects the hegemonic power of the Police in law enforcement in Indonesia, particularly in corruption cases. The case stemmed from the Commission's efforts to set the former Chief Traffic Coordinator (Kepala Korlantas) Irjen Djoko Susilo, a corruption suspect in the case of "SIM (Driving License) simulator". On the other hand, the police also said it was Djoko Susilo who investigated the case. Police showed its power when catching the Commission's investigator, Novel Baswedan, and pulled the 20 investigators out of the Commission.

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# Social Media and Moral Movement

*by* Dr. Ari Sulistyanto, M.i.kom

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This paper examines a conflict of interest case between Polri and KPK in handling corruption cases "SIM simulator" that occurred in 2012. Anti-corruption activists and the Commission were the bearers of a great narrative in realizing the act of communication. But the impetus for cultural reproduction narrative was hampered by "legal violence" committed by the police institution. Lifeworld is the world of KPK and anti-corruption activists which is the interaction between the actors for cultural reproduction. In Habermas' view, lifeworld moves evolutionarily to achieve the following social integration and system integration. But, through social media, the transformation of lifeworld runs quickly, because social media is borderless and timeless. In this way, to accelerate the formation opinions and moral movement to change or emancipation, the Police-Anti-Corruption Commission dispute case have become a model of how to make transformation and emancipation in society towards communication.

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**1. Background**

Hegemony with a set of dominations imposed by it will bring forth the resistance against the hegemonic power, and resistance emerges when colliding with the use of compulsive power. Case Polri vs *Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi* (KPK) (Corruption Eradication Commission, thereafter called Commission), occurring in 2012, reflects the hegemonic power of the Police in law enforcement in Indonesia, particularly in corruption cases. The case stemmed from the Commission's efforts to set the former Chief Traffic Coordinator (Kepala Korlantas) Irjen Djoko Susilo, a corruption suspect in the case of "SIM (Driving License) simulator". On the other hand, the police also said it was Djoko Susilo who investigated the case. Police showed its power when catching the Commission's investigator, Novel Baswedan, and pulled the 20 investigators out of the Commission.

Police's action got a strong reaction from anti-corruption activists through demonstrations and social media such as Twitter with "#dimanaSBY, #saveKPK" for the formation of public opinion. At that time, the hashtag became a trending topic on Twitter. The climax, on October 5, 2012, was that there were 39 997 tweets since the issue started [11]. The pressure from all elements of society, through the help of social media, led the government to finally decide to hand over the authority of handling the "SIM simulator" corruption cases to the Commission.

Anti-corruption activists comprising non-governmental organizations (NGO), community organizations, student activists, and community elements are the actors under the consideration of ethical and moral resistance against police who acted to enforce the dominant hegemony in legal action. Morality needs to be built. In handling the "SIM simulator" corruption case, police were concerned more with "its institutional interests" than with "public interest". There was skepticism in the public perception, that if a "SIM simulator" corruption case is addressed by the police, the law enforcement would not be objective, so that a phrase that "the law is sharp downward only, but blunt upward" became a truism.

KPK vs. Polri phenomenon in the context of Habermas' theory of communicative action is a form of pathology happening in the social system. Commodification of the law by the police has resulted in crisis or pathology. In communicative action theory, Habermas divides people into two levels: system and lifeworld. In understanding the system, ([3, 4]: 117), explained that the living world represents the viewpoint of the subjects acting in society, while the system involves an external society's perspective of a person not involved. Whereas, lifeworld, according to ([5]: 126), is the arena of transcendental points where speaker and listener meet, claiming reciprocity that they speak according to the world, and criticizing and substantiating the claim validity, and stating their disapproval, and achieving agreement.

The world's life, according to [3, 4], is the result of the established relationship between the actors who coexist in the same cultural traditions through communication actions. When the world understands people's lives like that, it must receive three fictions: a) autonomous actor, b) independence, c) communication transparency. They are actors formed interactively through an act of communication to develop cultural reproduction, and communicative action source. Lifeworld develops cultural reproduction **evolutionarily to achieve the social integration, and to achieve system integration.** The system grows slowly but evolutionarily beyond the life world, and structures in the system grow to be independent. When the system has a power, it ultimately has the power to control the lifeworld. A system achieves the social order through the integration of functional consequences of individual actions by anonymous abstract media [8].

The initial formation of a system is the structured lifeworld because of the interaction of the actors making up an understanding as a reaction to the reality they face. This understanding will eventually form structures such as family, justice system, economy, and political power. When these structures evolve, eventually they grow gradually into an independent and autonomous power of the far-left lifeworld. This reality describes the situation, for example, of a political system. It is originally intended to be a political will to make policy and decisions together, as described in the policy community in Ancient Greece. A policy or decision is made based on participation by communicative action actors. Each interaction and communication is intended to achieve the understanding in lifeworld. Politics is an autonomous region, only an abstraction of various informal relationships composing the power. Who is ruling and how a decision is made are the results of consensus.

However, the interests of individuals or groups are dominant, the psychological factors for fame and the will to make a political domination that was originally a world of harmonious life slowly are evolutionarily differentiated in the irrational political system. Political power flourishes in an authoritarian. The complexity of structure development with a variety of rationalizations undertaken exponentially grows structure that even can control the lifeworld. In [3, 4], Habermas called this the "colonization" lifeworld. This, in turn, led to the colonization of pathology in living systems. Precautionary measures in order to avoid colonization, as suggested by Habermas, are the rationalization of law. By law, norms are established that constrain the development of lifeworld and system, because the growth of both community levels is not restricted to the growth with its own logic.

KPK vs Polri dispute, as explained by the Police, is initially a lifeworld developing its own logic to seek for the law enforcement institution hegemony. Subjectivity based on ideological interests makes Polri ignore the norms of justice and morality. Commodification of law in the "SIM simulator" corruption cases is the Police's "colonization" in law enforcement leading to a reaction from other life worlds: anti-corruption activists and people who expect that the law can be applied fairly and democratically.

The problems arising in this study are, firstly, how is the ideological foundation of individual actors involved in the conflict between Polri and KPK in handling the corruption cases? Secondly, how is the role of social media to accelerate the transformation and emancipation in the conflict?

Few studies have been conducted on the role of ideology as the cause of conflict, but understanding the ideology of individual actors involved in the conflict, we will be able to explain the narrative hidden behind the event. Likewise, the actors are under construction in opinion formation. The position of the mass media is very important as a means of articulating the opinions of each actor involved.

From a theoretical perspective, this study sought to expand the study of Habermas's theory of communicative action. From a critical perspective, the police institution is a representation of the system that has been colonizing the world of life (Lebenswelt) in such a way, namely the Commission. In Lebenswelt's lifeworld the representation of community is embodied into a network of cooperation mediated by communication, with strategic relationships and collapse tucked inside. Grand narrative that wants to be put forward in this society is a society that is democratic and free from domination. The anti-corruption activists and the Commission are the bearers of a great narrative to commit communication acts. But the impetus for cultural reproduction narrative is obstructed by "legal violence" committed by the police institution.

At the time of the theory formation, Habermas's communicative action was based on the reality of the early stages of capitalist society development (the bourgeoisie) still accommodating their freedom of assembly, association and expression. In addition, subjects or actors in the society, as depicted by Habermas, are an educated and autonomous society, so that the world of life (Lebenswelt) still has a room for cultural reproduction. This study in macro context is intended to examine the activity of the instigators of anti-corruption struggle to develop the world of life (Lebenswelt). Through social media the role of accelerating the transformation can be done. This is different from Habermas' initial thesis that the transition towards a change of lifeworld undertakes evolutionary system integration. Indonesian condition is different from that of European, the basic constructs of Habermas in his theory. The existence of social media encourages the rapid transition for the developing countries, such as Indonesia. Thus, the purpose of current study is to describe the model of communication actions in accordance with the local character of each community.

## 2. Method

This study used qualitative methods with a historical approach. In historical approach, the history is firstly the source of data (text and historical); secondly, a certain perspective, where the text associated with a particular social context; and thirdly, an analysis, namely how to uncover context and compared with other facts. In this study, the sequence of events is the text to be interpreted. In the attempt of interpreting and analyzing the critical hermeneutics receipts of Jurgen Habermas, the main points requiring attention in the interpretation are [7], firstly, the interpretation that must be associated with the critique of ideology, namely empirical meaning to the conditions that developed at that time, such as social, economic and political; secondly, the analysis of social systems, meaning not merely objectively meaning (structural) but also done subjectively (post structurally), and thirdly, the one combined with the



philosophy of history that the interpretation linked to the future by taking into account the present and the past.

### 3. Finding and Discussion

The conflict between the police and the Commission originated from a conflict of interest within the authority of handling the "SIM simulator" corruption case with former chief traffic coordinator, Irjen Djoko Susilo as the suspect. Police holds the right to handle SIM simulator case both morally and legally. Morally, police were given the authority to clean the internal police. Meanwhile, from the judicial aspect, Polri was handling this case and had determined the suspect rather than the Commission. Polri could not directly submit the case to the Commission because Polri was bound by Article 109 KUHAP, which states that the investigation process could be stopped if it did not obtain sufficient evidence, the alleged incident was not a crime, and the suspect died.

Meanwhile the Commission believed that the authority was dealing with "SIM simulator" corruption case both morally and legally. In moral judgment, the cases involving police officers will result in a conflict of interest. In judicial considerations, the Commission has the authority to take over corruption cases being handled by the police and attorney. The Commission referred to Article 50 paragraph 3 and 4 UU No: 30 in Year 2002 stating that if a similar case is handled by police, the Commission and the attorney's document will be sent to the Commission. The moral argument for the "internal orderliness" in a corruption investigation authority shows the Police's desire to prove that firstly, Polri is a clean institution. It was displayed by the members of the corruption investigation. Secondly, it is one of the law enforcers in Indonesia having competence on the matter and no other institution can carry out the investigation. The ideology the Polri constructed is that an institution that is committed to the eradication of corruption.

But behind the ideology of Polri, there is a hidden interest of protecting the police. The investigation of "SIM simulator" corruption will stop the hands of the police by taking refuge from the rules in Article 109 KUHAP. Polri will declare the corruption case with the accused Irjen. Djoko Susilo was stopped because of insufficient evidence corruption. Polri's actions are attributed to a thriving reality against the spirit of lifeworld leading to openness and participation. In New Order era, Polri as part of the system can manipulate and dominate, but the development of the post-reform lifeworld tends to increase, so the attempt to perform the domination of lifeworld will faces a resistance. The Commission was born as a reaction against the rule of law, especially corruption. The authority was previously held by two major institutions: the police and the prosecutor. In post-reform era, the spirit to create a clean government

is not quite charged to the two institutions, because they in their reform era tended to be dominant and manipulative. The Commission and anti-corruption activists and communities, according to Habermas, is lifeworld where the actors create the democratic life. But lifeworld cannot develop because of the strong dominance of the system.

In the case of Indonesia, growing lifeworld achieve social integration of social media for their role as the means of creating public opinion. Social media, such as Twitter become a public space that free from the authorities 'interference, so that it becomes a medium of creating consciousness. Another character from Indonesia, for how lifeworld can be transformed into social integration, can even achieve system integration must be backed by mass action, demonstrations or extra parliamentary. In the case of "SIM simulator" corruption, anti-corruption activists, and community activists founded the "Army of weaver ants". They held massive demonstrations on October 7, 2012 in front of the Commission's office' [10]. The end of conflict of interest between Polri vs the Commission was the instruction of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) as the Chief of Police ordering subordinates to submit the "SIM simulator" corruption case to the Commission. The return of the commission's authority of handling corruption cases is a victory lifeworld.

The existence of a conflict, such as, Polrivs. KPK, showed the dominance of system on the lifeworld. The system is a superstructure developing the norms that must be obeyed by the citizens on the call of lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*). Groups, those within authority structures with a variety of devices, are capable of directing various forms of policy to others outside the purview of the structure. This condition is a form of domination. Habermas's theory of communicative action see that form of communication taking place in the dominance of instrumental action or communication is instrumental. This action-oriented objective achievement is successful, no matter whether or not the participants-citizens (*Lebenswelt*) in the law or legal superstructure accept. The most important thing in such communication actions is to achieve the purpose of law efficiently. The actors, such as Polri, emphasized on seeing the reality as the enactment of a set of norms that must be obeyed, though not legitimate for all concerned. Evidently, Polri actions were subjectively considered as a rational action eventually leading to protest or resistance.

In several events, the role of social media is quite effective in developing lifeworld. It is noteworthy that in the case of Prita Mulyasari, KPK vs Polri conflict or called "Cicak vs Buaya" conflict, social media facebook became a public space in the form of awareness to act on. Similarly, abroad, political changes in the Middle East, such as Egypt, became an example of social media's role in driving the social change. The role of social media in this study is understood as an effort to accelerate the transformation of lifeworld towards social integration and system integration, from action to instrumental communication action. Habermas in transition transformation refers to Marx's determinism,



namely the evolutionary changes taking place. Lifeworld growth is like people learning from the basic level to the next level until the order or values of the existing norms in the lifeworld institutionalized in social systems. Habermas in formulating the theory of communication actions does not agree with the transformation with the revolutionary road, because he does not want to repeat the failures of critical thinking pioneering first generation, such as Horkheimer, Adorno and Herbert Marcuse. Habermas prefers social transformation in the context of reform.

#### 4. Conclusion

KPK vs Polri conflict of interest, according to the theory of communicative action is a battle between the lifeworld by the system. The lifeworld is the Commission and instigators of anti-corruption activists, while Polri is the system. The ideology developed by the Commission and instigators of anti-corruption activists their "legal justice" for all concerned without discrimination. Polri ideology is the holder of the supremacy of law enforcement that corruption by members of the Police is the Polri internal problems; it will be resolved by Polri institution itself, but the ideology behind is the hidden interests of protecting the corps. The action taken by the police was not in line with "mainstream" openness to the current reform era. Polri and historical conditions attached image as law enforcement, in this case featuring the Police as antagonistic actor, and has become a "common enemy" for those seeking legal justice. Whereas, the Commission and the instigators of anti-corruption activists as actors and protagonists.

The role of social media is large enough to drive the transformation of lifeworld to achieve social integration. Social media to a public sphere is the virtual world. In addition to be the creation of opinion and the unification of consciousness, it has also become a medium of communication to protest in order to free them as the colony system. Theoretically, in the communication act theory there are two main concepts: namely lifeworld and system. Lifeworld is a world of interaction between the actors to understand the cultural reproduction, moving evolutionarily to achieve social integration and finally system integration. Habermas understands the transformation of lifeworld naturally. But with social media, transformation lifeworld moves quickly, because social media is borderless and timeless.

In contrast, for the public sphere as the creator of reality, theory of communication actions is limited by time and space, thereby moving the evolutionary transformation. Through theory, Habermas has never gone into how the transformation of instrumental action is towards communicative action. Besides, the theory of communication actions is based on "material base" of European society, where the middle class is in an autonomous position. In contrast to Indonesian context, the middle class is in a visible

state. But with social media help, literacy and public awareness have increased. Under this condition, the formation opinions and moral movement should be accelerated to change or to emancipate. The case of Polri vs. KPK dispute has become a model of how to do the transformation and emancipation in society towards communicative.

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