
Unravelling Conspiracy Theory Within Cultural Semiotics Framework as Narrative and Communication Strategies in Indonesian Social Media

Eka Fadilah

English Department, Universitas Widya Kartika, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: ekafadilah@widyakartika.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This paper aimed at exploring the meaning-making processes of conspiracy theories echoed by social media influencers as strategic narrative and communication systems. The topic was grounded in a cultural semiotic approach to dissect the aspects of signifier and signified as construed in social media. A nexus-case study was applied to make a deep analysis of meaning-making construction produced and re-produced by the influencers, taking up data triangulation derived from social media, theoretical frameworks, and empirical investigations. The study revealed that meaning was constructed through manipulating signifiers like Covid-19, Lato-Latto, and Dajjal worshipping, which were related to other floating signifiers to create polarization from the audience's perspective. Further, the meaning-making process was ontologically and epistemically baseless. Advanced recommendations are reiterated through this paper to provide a wide range of insight to cope with the issue presented.

Keywords: *conspiracy theory; cultural semiotics; strategic narrative and communication; social media; signifier framing*

INTRODUCTION

Amid globalization and the abundance of information through social networking sites (SNSs), conspiracy theory narratives have become a popular topic to be raised, discussed, and propagated through various internet platforms (i.e., social media). These platforms, originally heralded as a tool for fostering democratic ideals, have been employed to orchestrate the manipulation of the general populace for either pecuniary gain or political influence through the dissemination of spurious information, primarily comprised of unfounded conspiracy theories (Uscinski, 2019). These media platforms have facilitated the widespread dissemination of information, coupled with the pervasive influence of social media, to empower influencers to mold public sentiment and propagate conspiracy theories through

strategic narrative and communication (Madisson & Ventsel, 2021; Nissen, 2015).

Strategic conspiracy narratives and communication echoed by social media influencers entail purposeful planning, media production, audience design, and intentional communication management actions. Social media influencers, either representing societal groups or individuals, deploy these strategies to manipulate the sign process and impact perceptions, attempting to shape opinions, reinforce identity, garner support, or exert positive influence (Leone et al., 2020). In contrast to mainstream media, alternative media utilized by influencers offer distinct coverage access, information veracity, and emotional packaging (Atton, 2002; Madisson et al., 2021). Atton (2002, p. 4) pinpoints

that alternative media “are crucially about offering the means for democratic communication to people who are normally excluded from media production.” According to Atton, alternative media empowers underrepresented individuals to share their stories through non-commercial distribution sites, transforming social relations, roles, and responsibilities, as well as communication processes, which is a key aspect of the media democratization process. Furthermore, Atton (2002) outlines key attributes of alternative media, including reliance on modern technology, non-professionalized organizational structures, horizontal communication, radical content, innovative distribution mechanism, and a fascinating aesthetic. This definition indicates that social media platforms (e.g., YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram) can be categorized as alternative media, different from mainstream media. Social media are extensively utilized by influencers to deliver information to their audiences, highlighting their value in contemporary communication landscapes.

Social media influencers utilize speech, images, and text to construct information stacks, shaping templates for diverse audiences by invoking “transmedial strategic conspiracy narratives” involving strategic storytelling that occurs simultaneously across a variety of platforms and includes participation from numerous official spokespersons, social media influencers, and regular users (Madisson et al., 2021, p. 98). These influencers interact with the narratives, offering various levels of conscious involvement to shape the entire story. This convergence acts as a locus where textual heterogeneity, including language style, narrative strategies, and visual features, influences audience interpretation (Spassova, 2018). Nissen’s study reveals Russian information war actors leveraging social media to disseminate content, fostering misleading connections and undermining NATO’s credibility (Nissen, 2015). These influencers alter public sentiment to achieve political and economic aims through orchestrated information attacks.

Similarly, influencers disseminating Covid-19 conspiracy theories damage public trust in government vaccination efforts (Wirawan et al., 2021). Studies have proven the influence of online media which significantly maintains group ideologies and conspiracy theories (Madisson, 2016). The strategic narratives deployed have resulted in polarized information functioning, since closed auto-communication systems reinforce these narratives, confirming and strengthening group beliefs despite dubious data (Leone et al., 2020; Madisson & Ventsel, 2021). Nadzir’s (2020) study in Indonesia demonstrates a major lack of understanding of the Covid-19 pandemic,

with some perceiving it as a conspiracy orchestrated and perpetuated by specific groups. These narratives generate distrust, misinformation, vulnerability to social media influence, and vaccine refusal, eroding faith in vaccine safety and efficacy (Nadzir, 2020). These groups perpetuate the pandemic by portraying it as a conspiracy, leading to misinformation, distrust of the government, social media influence, and religious views. These beliefs initially serve comprehension but enhance panic, distrust, and unfavorable actions such as vaccine refusal, resulting in lower confidence in vaccine safety and efficacy among those subscribing to them.

A conspiracy theory is a framework used to explain events through clandestine collaboration, generally perceived as malevolent (Coady, 2006). It plays a key function in distributing misinformation, connecting various events, and shaping public perception (Madisson et al., 2021). The strategic narratives within conspiracy theories aim to foster a hermeneutic of suspicion, discredit political adversaries, and seek concealed information. The effectiveness of spreading conspiracy narratives depends on cultural context, audience characteristics, and semiotic composition. Additionally, conspiracy theories, specifically those associated with Jewish communities (Wistrich, 2004), are prevalent in Southeast Asia. Scholars such as Reid (2010) delves into the origin and impact of the Jewish conspiracy theory in the region, revealing its dual role in bolstering national identity and potentially straining relations with Western countries and Israel.

Conspiracy theories are commonly linked to anti-Western sentiment and intergroup disputes, which impact group identity (Mashuri & Zaduqisti, 2019). Conflict perception mediates the association among negative stereotypes, wrath, and aggressive attitudes toward the West. Conspiracy theory narratives are an exponent of fake news (hoaxes) purposefully generated to deceive the public (Madisson, 2016; Madisson et al., 2021). However, Benkler et al. (2018) suggest that conspiracy theory narratives are more hazardous than fake news (hoaxes) because they include and guide the audience as an information target to interpret a group of people concealing a secret behind a series of events. Socio-psychological characteristics predict support for post-truth collective action in Indonesia, including belief in conspiracies, negative stereotypes, identification with one’s group, and belief in an alternative truth. Support for post-truth collective action is higher among those dissatisfied with the political and economic situation in Indonesia (Mashuri et al., 2022). Intergroup threats, negative emotions, and identity subversion also play a

role in anti-Western conspiracy theories (Mashuri et al., 2016).

Previous studies have quantitatively explored the roots and impacts of conspiracy theories, but a noteworthy gap exists in rigorously studying how these theories are deconstructed through the semiosis process of signs on social media. This gap is particularly visible in the ontological interpretation of the semiotic cultural conflict, drawing from Lotman's work. Lotman's Tartu-Moscow School of Cultural Semiotics focuses on the cultural representation and interpretation of signs (Semenenko, 2016; Yudithadewi & Parikesit, 2021). Cultural semiotics, as defined by Lotman (1990), analyzes the interaction of multiple sign systems, focusing on simplified versions of reality rather than its whole richness. It emphasizes signs as communication strategies, with texts being intricate arrangements of signs (Semenenko, 2016). Lotman argues that cultural semiotics involves unified codes for auto-communication, transforming stereotypes in conspiracy theories like the Illuminati, Freemasons, and Jewish communities into new codes associated with nationalism, religions, and ethnicity (Atton, 2006; Nissen, 2015; Madisson, 2016). In auto-communication, although the process is predetermined, generating meaning incorporates justifications and stereotypes and is typically resistant to opposing ideas proposed by others (Atton, 2006).

This study delves into strategic narratives and communication tied to Lotman's (1990) cultural semiotics as deliberate behaviors covering strategic planning, media creation, audience design, and image maintenance (Madisson et al., 2021). Semenenko (2016) contrasts the traditional communication schema (i.e., language, text, and dialogue) with Lotman's communication schema (i.e., dialogic situation, real dialogue, text, and language). In dialogic situations, influencers employ semiotic systems like icons, symbols, and sounds to shape perceptions and impact social media. In the real dialogue stage, they use images, video snippets, or pictures, together with modulated vocal tones, to capture the audience's attention. The text structure is a consequence of semiotic systems that influence language creation and interpretation within communication schemas, with conspiracy theories stressing syncretic cognition and seemingly contradictory discourses (Madisson, 2016). Despite the collaborative character of social media, predictable interpretative tendencies dominate, influencing viewer impressions of affiliated groups (Niessen, 2015).

This study focuses on topics propagated on social media, such as Lato-Latto and Rp75,000 denominations on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, which offer semiotic

processing in texts and images. Additionally, topics like Covid-19 and worshipping Dajjal on YouTube provide semiotic processing through audio-visual and speech elements. Social media helps traditional regimes bypass public discourse management and express opinions (Uscinski, 2019). Understanding multimodal strategic narratives as the topics above, incorporating active audience participation through transmedia storytelling, is vital for creating considerable impact, engaging audiences, and contributing to narrative development across platforms (Madisson & Ventsel, 2021).

METHOD

This study employed a nexus analysis to analyze the meaning-making process of cultural semiotics, utilizing data from transmedial platforms depicting strategic narratives and communication of conspiracy theory. The data were purposively selected from social media platforms associated to conspiracy theories propagated by social media influencers. Nexus analysis, as a kind of discourse analysis, focuses on social agents' acts and conceptualizes practice as an accumulation over time (Scollon and Scollon, 2004). This analytical approach systematically documents semiotic viewpoints, facilitating the identification of elements that solidify processes into practices for future examination (Mariapesch, 2022). Nexus analysis views the process as a convergence of discourses circulating within it, intricately linked to three important factors: "the historical bodies" of phenomena, "the interaction orders," and "the discourses in place" (Scollon and Scollon, 2004, p. 19). While historical aspects of phenomena are noticeable in social media observations, their clarity is considerably decreased in semiotic analysis. The article focuses on evaluating the formation of conspiracy theories as the discourse in place, along with exploring the complexity of the interaction order within the process of semiosis.

Data Collection

The data were taken purposively and systematically, encompassing speech, textual content, and images, aligning with the strategic narrative communication concepts explored in the subject matters of Covid-19, Lato-Latto, Dajjal worshipping, and the Rp75,000 denominations as outlined by Madisson and Ventsel (2021). The topics were selected based on specific criteria that garnered considerable attention, notably during the commencement of the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2023, which demonstrated several commonalities. Firstly, they were promoted by simplifying complicated

phenomena into discourses relating to conspiracy beliefs, including the Illuminati, Freemason, Dajjal, specific ethnicities, and countries. Secondly, they were framed by manipulating cultural semiotic signs, distinguishing between inners (we) and outers (they), with inners representing the cultural order of specific groups (i.e., Muslims, local ethnicities, eastern, democracy) and outers (i.e., Jews, Chinese, Western, communism) perceived as external threats to existing cultures. Thirdly, they were propagated utilizing transmedia storytelling with more than one social media platform (Jenkins, 2006; 2007), structuring conspiracy narratives linked to certain religions, ethnicities, and xenophobia. The employment of multiple media platforms to transmit the same topic with different narratives constitutes an effective mode of disseminating information (Jenkins, 2006) by employing speech, images, and text to shape information for targeted audiences.

The choice of social media platforms was driven by the significant follower and subscriber base of influencers. These influencers disseminated conspiracy theories not only on one platform but across multiple ones (e.g., YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook). For example, conspiracy theories related to Covid-19 broadcasted on Deddy Corbuzier's podcast with 20.5 million subscribers are distributed on other social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram with slightly altered strategic narratives. Likewise, Katakita's account's distribution of the Lato-Latto issue, which claimed 205,000 followers on Instagram and 1.4 million followers on Facebook, demonstrated divergences in strategic narratives across the two social media platforms. Additionally, topics related to Dajjal worshipping in Bandung and the currency denomination of Rp75,000, disseminated through the Azlam Islami Channel on YouTube and the Uttha account on Twitter, respectively, were also narrated with slight differences on other social media platforms. The data were systematically coded based on the utterances such as 'Dajjal', 'Cina', "Yahudi", "Amerika", "Freemason" and other signs connected to conspiracy theories. Those codes were then constructed into categories of semiosis that eventually formed themes related to the narrative and communication strategy of conspiracy theories.

Data Analysis

This study analyzed the semiotic process of text-image processing and audio-visual elements within cultural semiotics. It focused on how social media influencers built dialogues and created new texts, followed by language creation for interpretation. The analysis shifted to the

distribution of strategic conspiracy narratives, which are a meaning-making process involving interrelated signs evoking an emotional response in the audience. The categorization of data led to the identification of themes arising from the intricate order of semiotic processes. The analysis was based on emotional reactions and intuitive recognition, identifying readers' emotional reactions, either positive or negative, as a result of strategic conspiracy narratives established by influencers on social media platforms.

FINDINGS

The objective of this research is to elucidate the meaning-making processes associated to cultural semiotics presented on social media, covering the subject contents perceived to be linked with conspiracy theories by influencers in the realm of social media. Figure 1 depicts the roles of such influencers in molding and propagating conspiracy theories, serving as narrators and mediators. This includes dialogue situations and real dialogue through transmedia storytelling that introduces contentious and novel texts associated with distinct group and ethnic identities. This leads to strategic narratives and communication, establishing numerous themes (languages) exhibited through those transmedia storytellers. These also steer the perspectives of their targeted audiences, either to enhance their group identities (we-audience) or the feeling of being threatened by outer groups (they-audience). Leveraging their wide reach and influence, influencers can trigger a cascading effect of messages across social media, thereby shaping public perceptions of certain issues. Consequently, social media influencers hold the power to impact and exacerbate societal tensions by either fortifying pre-existing conflicts or instigating new ones (See figure 1).

Within the semiotic conflict ontology, conflict is intrinsic to the semiotic process, emphasizing its role as the origin of conflict (Madisson & Ventsel, 2021). Signs are not merely symbols but representations molded by cultural context, personal experience, and individual history, stressing the interwoven elements in the semiotic process (Eco, 2005; Laclau & Mouffe, 1984; Lotman, 1982). The reader model (Eco, 2005) explains how audiences, despite a lack of data, embrace conspiracy theories through this semiotic process. I present the findings sequentially, as follows:

Closed-Strategic Narratives

The observation incorporates the narratives and strategic communication connected to conspiracy theories

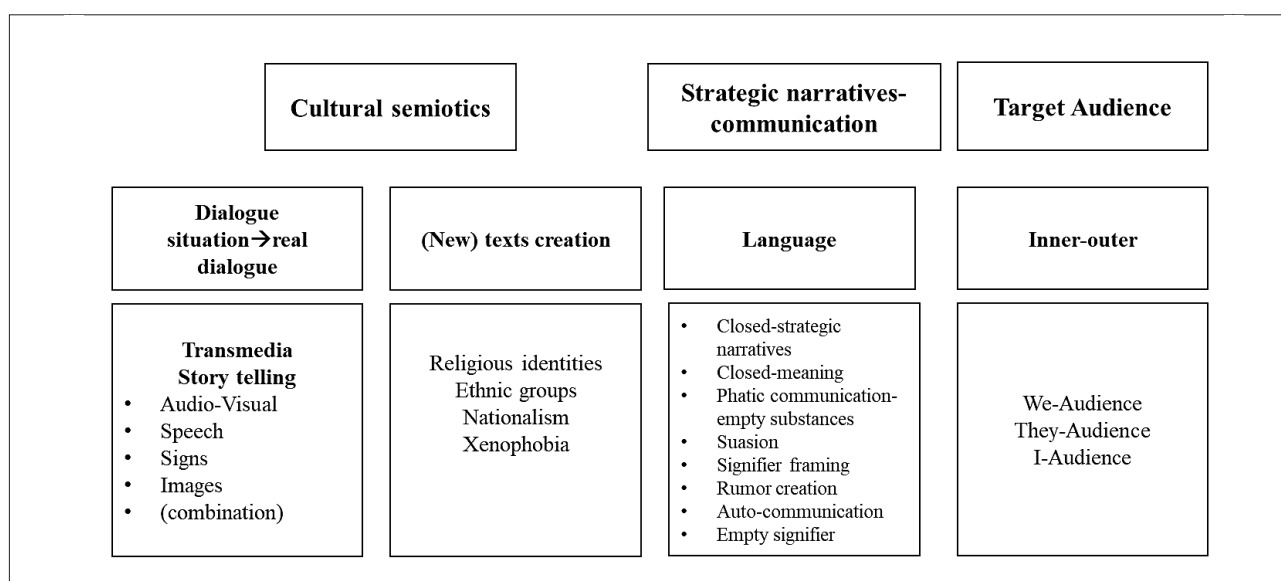


Figure 1. Cultural semiotics use as strategic narratives and communication to unravel conspiracy theories

Table 1. The categories explicating closed-strategic narratives

| Script | Speech-utterance | Categories |
|--------|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | “Berdasarkan data dari sahabat saya sebagai profesor di Cambridge University, saya confirm bahwa ini [virus corona] adalah dibuat” (Based on data from my friend as a professor at Cambridge University, I confirm that this (corona virus) was made) - <i>minutes 12.16.</i> | Simplification; Quoting an expert |
| 2 | “Kita percaya bahwa dunia farmasi itu darling-nya adalah Obama, karena Obama memiliki Obama Care selama delapan tahun. Dunia farmasi dulu tajir melintir. Setelah (Donald) Trump menjadi Presiden (AS), dia tebas Obama Care, yang darling-nya Trump adalah industrial militer ya,” (“We believe that the pharmaceutical industry’s darling was Obama, due to his implementation of Obama Care over eight years. The pharmaceutical world was immensely prosperous during that time. After Donald Trump assumed the Presidency, he dismantled Obama Care, indicating that Trump’s darling was the military-industrial complex”) - <i>minutes 14.22.</i> | Evil personified |
| 3 | “Jadi dari tiga virus yang ada ya, A, B, C, [jenis virus] A ini akhirnya memang Amerika. Tapi, ini bukan [dari] Trump, ungkap dia” (“So, out of the three viruses, A, B, C, this type A virus is indeed rooted in America. However, this is not from Trump, he expressed”) - <i>minutes 15.48.</i> | Xenophobia |

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Br_TP-psoM0

propagated by social media influencers, which are a reconstruction of recurrent signs to create new signs and meanings as a closed-strategic narrative. One of them is the statement made by Mardigu WP, commonly known as Bossman Sontoloyo, in Deddy Corbuzier’s podcast on May 19, 2020, titled ‘Corona jelas konspirasi!! Saya jelaskan (Corona is certainly a conspiracy!! I will explain)’.

Table 1 indicates how influencers employ closed-strategic narratives to actively impart meaning to audiences who share similar backgrounds and perspectives, often avoiding other perspectives from outside their group (Madisson & Ventsel, 2016).

Rationalization is utilized “based on data from my friend as a professor at Cambridge University” (Script 1) that is wrapped in language, exemplifiers, and quoting an expert is explicit language that is communicated through their social networks to preserve the narratives. By situating a specific community or nation (i.e., Indonesia) as a geopolitical entity imperilled by a superpower nation (i.e., the USA) ostensibly engaged in clandestine machinations through the subtle deployment of their faction’s distinctive signs and symbols (Lotman, 2007). Lotman remarks that this imperilled country usually positions itself as helpless due to the power of a power system: “We believe that the pharmaceutical industry’s

darling was Obama”. (Script 2) that is personified as a protector for the wild, evil, immoral minorities, and so on. The only way is to reconstruct the meaning through the signs they create to return to the path of truth and morality. Likewise, the utterance “...is indeed rooted in America” (Script 3) denotes a huge institution believed to play a role in spreading the infection. This claim is aimed to a specific group who share the same ideology concerning the threat of Western creating Xenophobia.

Closed Meaning

The strategic narratives echoed by social media influencers are also created to generate an *echo chamber* effect for diverse perspectives on the creation of closed meaning. The word echo chamber refers to a situation in which debate participants are solely exposed to the same beliefs or views as themselves, making it impossible to notice alternate views or opinions. As a result, debates tend to be homogeneous and less diverse in perspectives or viewpoints (Madisson & Ventsel, 2021). This produces polarization of protagonists and antagonism among spectators and a multiplicity of interpretations from the views of both camps (Madisson, 2016). In closed communication, logic often fails to determine the veracity of information and overlooks opposing opinions (Habermas, 1998). Ideal meaning creation, according

to Lotman (2005), involves dialogic communication to create a rational consensus. Closed-meaning creation is characterized by one-sided perspectives that ignore competing viewpoints, typically labelling them as illogical (e.g., China, America, according to my friend). Certain groups may imagine a worldwide conspiracy, feeling themselves as besieged by external hostile forces (Eco, 1990).

Phatic Communication-Empty Substances

Another social media influencer employs unified signs such as the eye of Dajjal, the polarized cross image from the Illuminati plot, Zionists, and Masons as well as terms related to religious elements in a phatic language “*Demi Allah* (for the sake of Allah)”, contrasted to “Al’Masih”, “Yahudi” (Table 2). Such signs are viewed as part of their conspiracy ideas to rule and endanger their cultural internal affairs (Ballinger, 2011). Social media site members use factual information in semi-public messages to identify friends and detect patterns developed by commenting, sharing, and liking user content. This phatic communication reflects a definite hierarchy of communication and establishes the supremacy of some contacts over others. Such phatic communication is discovered on the YouTube video platform of the Azlam

Table 2. Phatic communication as an empty substance in attracting sympathy as an ideological equation

| Script | Speech-utterance | Categories |
|--------|---|-------------------------------|
| 1 | “ <i>Ayahnya bertanya kepada saya tentang Dajjal, tentang Yesus Kristus, tentang fitnah Dajjal Ini adalah bukti bahwa fitnah Dajjal nyata adanya</i> ”. (“His father asked me about the Dajjal, about Jesus Christ, about the trials of the Dajjal... This is evidence of the existence of the Dajjal’s trial”) - <i>minutes 0:17</i> . | Polarizing religious elements |
| 2 | “ <i>N mengunjungi rumah A, A adalah teman N, ketika mengunjungi Rumah A, X telah berada di sana, X adalah anggota sekte yang menyembah Dajjal di kota Bandung ini</i> ” (“N visited A’s house, where A is N’s friend. Upon visiting A’s house, X was already present there. X is a member of the sect that worships Dajjal in the city of Bandung”) - <i>minutes 3.34</i> . | Secret of secret |
| 3 | “ <i>Tidak akan keluar Al-Masih Ad-Dajjal sampai sistemnya tegak dan berdiri terlebih dahulu. Dan sistem inilah yang sedang dibangun oleh Yahudi lewat mega proyek mereka yang disebut dengan ‘Novus Ordo Seclorum’ (bahasa Latin) atau ‘New World Order’ (bahasa Inggris) atau dalam bahasa kitanya ‘Tatanan Dunia Baru’</i> ” (“The emergence of Al-Masih Ad-Dajjal will not occur until his system is firmly established and in place. This system is currently being constructed by the Jews through their mega project known as ‘Novus Ordo Seclorum’ in Latin or ‘New World Order’ in English, or in our language, ‘Tatanan Dunia Baru’”) - <i>minutes 4.09</i> . | Suasion |
| 4 | “ <i>Bayangkan...ketika si N berada di pesantren sekalipun...tidak lepas dari propaganda yang notabene adalah fitnah Dajjal...intinya ingin menjauhkan manusia dari tauhiddari Sidratul Mustaqim</i> ” (“Imagine ... when N is at the Islamic boarding school; they can’t escape the propaganda, which is essentially Dajjal’s slander. The point is to distance people from the true path of tauhid and of Sidratul Mustaqim”) – <i>minutes 9.15</i> | Religious belonging |

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NyltUkzDH4I&t=259s>

Islami Channel, posted on December 13, 2022.

In this video, Ustadz Baequni, a renowned Islamic preacher on social media, explains the relationship between Illuminati symbols and conspiracy theories relating to a Dajjal-worshipping sect in Bandung. At the beginning of the video, Ustadz Baequni shares his experience with someone who requested an exorcism (*ruqyah*) and asked him about Dajjal, Jesus Christ, and Dajjal's trials.

In his speech (Table 2, Scripts 2 and 3), Ustadz Baequni explains that the Dajjal-worshipping sect in Bandung is a manifestation of the Illuminati's ambition to control the world and that the sect employs symbols such as the all-seeing eye to communicate secretly among themselves. He also alleges that the Covid-19 pandemic is part of the Illuminati's goal to create a new world order. Overall, Ustadz Baequni's video represents an example of how conspiracy theories can be constructed through the reinterpretation of existing symbols, and how they can be disseminated through social media platforms to affect people's beliefs and actions.

Furthermore, the phatic communication presented by Ustad Baequni is what Eco believes is 'empty secrecy', which refers to information that is deemed a secret but has no substance (Eco, 2005). Empty secrecy is employed by influencers as a strategy to retain opinions and manage their audience, as the symbols or signs have the capacity to affect public opinion, even when there is no concrete information included inside them. Also, the aim of this strategic narrative is addressed to a certain group engaging only its members. This can increase the group's beliefs and solidarity, as well as better their comprehension of the group's ideology and aims (Madisson & Ventsel, 2016).

Suasion

The semiotic process of people initials N, A, and X that leads to the conclusion about the information on the Dajjal worship sect from the perspective of conspiracy theory can be understood as suasion, "a short-circuited enthymeme that does not show its persuasive nature" (Eco, 1986, p. 115). Eco's philosophy of persuasion and suasion is contrasted by suasion, which seeks to achieve the same goal in a more friendly manner. Strategic narratives, particularly through social media, aim to alter audiences' attitudes and behaviors. Conspiracy theories, employed by individuals or groups, bridge information gaps and provide alternative explanations for perceived unreasonable events. While they might act as resistance against cultural or political dominance, they can also erode trust in government and media, posing hazards to

power balance and societal stability.

Conspiracy theories, as stated by Lotman (2007), serve as alternative worldviews providing simplified explanations for complicated events emerging from a perceived loss of control and influence in modern life. The strategic narratives, as in 'Dajjal', "This system is currently being constructed by the Jews through their mega project known as 'Novus Ordo Seclorum' in Latin or 'New World Order'" (Table 2, Script 4), are driven by a need for coherence in uncertain and intricate situations, may isolate individuals or groups, challenging efforts to foster cooperation and peace. Lotman argues that conspiracy theories are flawed explanations based on principles disregarded by decision-makers and mass media, originating when individuals or groups try to comprehend or manage a complicated reality.

Signifier Framing

The strategic narratives connected with conspiracy theories are also renowned in the Twitter tweet about Lato-Latto. Lato-Latto is a game that has two balls connected by rope and has a ring on top of it as the controller when played (Marthasari, 2023). It can be observed how conspiracy theories are portrayed as a group of people developed as controllers of the world. It may be noted how the texts as signifiers are framed into non-existent signs by referring to "Lato" as "I am" and "Latto" as "Jewish". It cannot be denied that some social media influencers exploit specific signs: the Dajjal's eye, the polarized cross image of the Illuminati plot, Zionists, and Masons as a conspiracy effort to dominate and endanger their cultural identity (Ballinger, 2011). Lotman and Uspenskij (1978) identify an anti-culture culture as a situation where another culture evolves as resistance against a certain group's culture. This sort of culture involves no set meaning-making, as it links together a specific system of meaning to dominate discursivity, arrest diversity, and build a center. (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Drawing on Lacanian, Zizek (1989) argues that these are 'nodal points' that structure a discourse around a primary favored signifier or reference point. Signifier Lato-Latto is a signifier that ties and is framed together with pre-existing signifiers (i.e., Freemasons, Illuminati, and Jews).

Figure 2 demonstrates the signifier framing of Lato-Latto targeted to the conspiracy theory shared on Instagram, #katakitaig. The caption starts with a warning *hati-hati* (be aware), followed by the construction of the meaning-making process of Lato-Latto. In this context, the depiction of "Freemason and Illuminati" conspiracies is portrayed as a conflict or antagonism (Laclau &



Figure 2. Signifier framing addressed to Lato-Latto. Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/CnKPu3QB-Lp/?utm_source=ig_embed&ig_rid=f64f9d66-3ef7-41d0-880c-93a6a794cd98

Mouffe, 1985) that poses a threat to the cultural identity of the group. Recognizing conflict as inherent in society, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) recommend viewing it not as something to be abolished but as a process that can fortify democracy and foster public consensus. Agonistic logic, as emphasized by Mouffe (2005), underlines the need of acknowledging differences and conflicts as integral aspects of the democratic process (see also Uscinski, 2019). However, when constructed as strategic narratives, conflicts can be even more perilous, eroding public trust in the government (Benkler et al., 2018).

The social media influencer, in this example, attempts to instil and propagate conspiracy theories by twisting and framing signs to match other signs (Lotman, 1990), as in the utterances “*Lato artinya Aku, Lato artinya Yahudi*” (“Lato means ‘I am’, Lato means ‘Jewish’”). People may be drawn to conspiracy theories seeking exclusive knowledge, community connection, and meaning in complex events, often selecting facts fitting with their beliefs. However, embracing false or weak theories can adversely affect individuals and society, influencing decisions, and actions, and encouraging skepticism in institutions. Hence, maintaining critical thinking and reasonable appraisal of information is vital (Madisson & Ventsel, 2021).

Rumor Creation

Conspiracy theories proliferate due to reasons like

information overload, ambiguity, and alignment with individual beliefs (Sunstein, 2020). Psychological aspects, such as the need for control, confirmation bias, and availability bias, also contribute to their acceptability. Efforts to distribute actual information are crucial in countering their proliferation, as they can inspire needless suspicion and aggravate societal polarization. Moreover, transmission through alternative media like YouTube and Twitter might weaken trust in government institutions and mass media, thereby upsetting societal equilibrium (Lotman, 2007). According to Hardin (2002), rumors and speculation differ greatly, with rumors being untrue and negative, while speculation is based on assumptions about unverified information.

This finding is consistent with Mashuri et al.’s (2016) study on identity subversion’s involvement in determining the impact of intergroup threat and negative emotions on belief in anti-Western conspiracy theories in Indonesia. Identity subversion moderates the link between intergroup danger, negative emotions, and belief in anti-Western conspiracy theories. It refers to individuals or groups feeling that their identity is being disturbed or altered by external or foreign forces. In Mashuri et al.’s research, identity subversion pertains to the perception that Indonesian culture and identity are being disrupted by the presence of the West and other foreign forces, leading to the creation of anti-Western and anti-American conspiracy theories in Indonesia.



Figure 3. Competition to find the hidden hammer-sickle and cross #HUTRI75. Source: <https://twitter.com/uttha/status/1295017187774611458/photo/1>

Auto-Communication Strategy

Figure 3 illustrates an image, shared on one of social media platforms, that is depicted as a meaning-making process of the Rp75,000 Indonesian rupiah denomination attributed to a certain communist party (i.e., hammer and sickle) and religion (i.e., cross). Images can be utilized as weapons of war in the context of modern warfare (O’Loughlin, 2011). He demonstrates that images produced, manipulated, and disseminated by states or groups in the context of war can affect public opinion and create false opinions and impressions. Furthermore, images are also often manufactured and transmitted for specific political or military purposes, and social media has accelerated the distribution of such images. Therefore, he emphasizes the importance of understanding how images can be used to affect our opinions on war, and how we can discern between real images and images that are manipulated to impact our beliefs.

The image displayed denotes an auto-communication strategy by attributing and associating symbols to a given institution and social community aiming for a shared ideology to the targeted audiences (Madisson & Ventsel, 2021). Strategic auto-communication refers to a specific meaning-making process in which the sender and receiver of the message overlap (Lotman, 2000). He also adds that the auto-communication framework he developed is still in the process of development and needs to be contrasted with communication-oriented systems. Therefore, Lotman stresses that there is still considerable work to be done to achieve a quantifiable comparison between these systems.



Figure 4. DAJ as DAJjal as a government conspiracy. Source: <https://twitter.com/nadnway/status/1295018404013731842>

Empty Signifier

The process of semiosis in Figure 4 attempts to construct a new meaning by exploiting the sign of DAJ associated with the serial number of the Rp75,000 banknote as a DAJjal plot. The semiotic process (the process

Table 3. Empty signifier by exploiting symbols

| Script | Speech-utterance | Categories |
|--------|---|---|
| 1 | " <i>Itu mah jelas adat Cina. selama ane belajar di sekolah sampai sekarang, baru tahu ada baju adat kayak bangsa China. #PantasNGOTOT bikin uang 75 ribuan,</i> " ("The attire clearly reflects Chinese customs. Throughout my schooling until now, I have only recently become aware of traditional attire resembling that of the Chinese culture. #AssertivelyDetermined to spend 75 thousand Rupiah") - @SalimBo77555895 (17/8/2020). | Ethnic symbol |
| 2 | " <i>Lomba mencari palu arit dan salib tersembunyi #HUTRI75</i> ". ("The competition involves searching for a sickle hammer and hidden cross") – @uttha (16/8/2020). | Communist and Christian symbols (floating signifiers) |

Source: <https://twitter.com/nadnway/status/1295018404013731842>

of forming signs and meanings) is a process of inner hybridization (Lotman, 1984). In this context, the term of inner hybridization in this context refers to the fusion or unification of two distinct elements into a new unity. Lotman argues that the process of constructing signs and meanings requires the interaction of numerous components such as personal experience, culture, history, and social context. In semiotic studies, signifiers and signified are two fundamental factors involved in the process of producing signs. The signifier is the physical form or concrete reference of a sign, while the signified is the meaning or concept associated with the signifier. According to Selg and Ventsel (2020), there is not always a direct or natural relationship between the signifier and the signified in the process of semiosis.

This is because signifiers and the signified can be switched or replaced with other elements in the semiotic process. For example, in language, specific words can be employed to symbolize a given concept or meaning, even though there is no direct or natural relationship between the word and the meaning. This illustrates that there is a societal agreement or norm in utilizing specific signifiers to generate multiple signified. The meaning-making process constitutes an 'empty signifier' that is a pure signifier without the signified in which the signified (meaning) is gained through its positioning relative to other signs (Žižek, 1989).

Semiosis also appears in comments that link signs to certain symbols (Table 3, Script 1 and 2), such as *adat Cina* (Chinese custom), *baju adat kayak bangsa China* (traditional attire like China), and *palu arit dan salib* (the hammer-sickle and cross). The symbol interpretations exhibit polysemy and ambiguity in semiosis, where one signifier may represent multiple, distinct meanings, or one signified may be linked with several different signifiers (Žižek, 1989). This implies the absence of a definitive and

singular relationship between signifier and signified in semiotic processes. Žižek (1989) argues that significance lies not solely in the complexity of signifiers, but rather in the word's ability, as a word, to unify a given field and establish its identity on the level of the signifier itself.

The meaning-making processes of signifier Rp75,000 have a fixed meaning (signified) when it fits the momentum of the 75th anniversary of the Indonesian independence. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) suggest elements as signified which have not yet been fixed (floating signifiers). It may have a definite meaning if there were a transition from elements to the moment (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 110). In other words, although nodal points gather the crystallization within certain elements and moments, floating signifiers represent an ongoing struggle to seek fixed meaning within the moment.

DISCUSSION

This research unveils the process of meaning-making in conspiracy theory themes on social media, illustrating how strategic conspiracy narratives by influencers create polarization (Livingstone et al., 2018; Madisson et al., 2021; Nissen, 2015). Despite inadequate or non-existent evidence, individuals may adopt conspiracy theories due to psychological, societal, and ideological elements in cases like the Covid-19 pandemic, worshipping Dajjal, and Lato-Latto. These narratives, functioning as affective semiosis and communication, not only mold the emotions of the participating actors but also hold a pivotal function in the construction of story worlds, exerting a profound impact on how interpreters discern situations and formulate decisions regarding their conduct (Madisson et al., 2021). Also, the strategic narratives included in conspiracy theories are aimed to foster a hermeneutic of suspicion, sustaining skepticism

towards mainstream media and authoritative figures. This sophisticated process includes the undermining of political adversaries and a continual pursuit of concealed information (Uscinski, 2019).

Žižek (2002) suggests that exposure to such phenomena through mass media precedes real-life experience, impacting perceptions. Mass media constructs social reality, as shown in the profound impact of media presentation on events like 9/11. Conspiracy theories, viewed by Hardin (2002) as coherent ideologies, are intentionally generated and promoted for individuals sceptical of politics, demonstrating poor self-esteem, and generally opposing authority. Hardin characterizes this as a 'crippled epistemology', relying on irrational knowledge, rumors, cognitive biases, and purposely misleading information.

Strategic conspiracy narratives, characterized by closed meaning and phatic communication, operate as closed auto-communication systems intended to reinforce influencers' group beliefs (Leone et al., 2020; Madisson, 2016). These narratives were notably significant in events like Donald Trump's presidential campaign and the Brexit case in 2016 (Medisson & Ventsel, 2021). Globally, these narratives have been effective in harming Hillary Clinton's run for US president, which was associated with a satanic cult and a paedophile plot. Similarly, the Covid-19 pandemic has not escaped the realm of conspiracy theories, being portrayed as an anti-Western pandemic controlled by George Soros and his allies as a systemic drive to control and destroy nations. Furthermore, Wistrich (2004) elucidated that conspiracy theories targeting Jews are often grounded in factual inaccuracies and prejudice, as seen in cases like Lato-Latto, feeding anti-Semitic sentiments and intensifying violence and discrimination against Jewish communities.

The evolution of information technology, coupled with the ubiquity of social networking, has transformed social media into an arena of information conflict. Social media influencers hold tremendous power as they traverse, reconstruct, and manipulate signs within their symbolic dimensions. Their strategic role comprises preserving, nurturing, and controlling audience perspectives, garnering support, and undermining adversaries through the crafting of tailored narratives (Livingstone & Nassetta, 2018; Nissen, 2015). Social media sites such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram function as alternative media for the strategic dissemination of conspiracy theories. Notably, the fabrication of rumors, rather than speculation, emerges as an effective communication weapon in the propagation of these beliefs. Some conspiracy ideas seem to develop

spontaneously, spreading across numerous social networks simultaneously (Livingstone & Nassetta, 2018; Nissen, 2015).

The proliferation of conspiracy theories (e.g., fuelled by a lack of historical understanding, unsubstantiated data, and mitigation of opened meaning and dialogues) involves claims such as Mardigu's Cambridge University source, Bauquni's Dajjal worship revelation, and the Lato-Latto group allegedly framing signs related to certain religions, ethnicities, and nationalism. Werksman and Lachman's examination of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion demonstrates its historical fraud, a significant document in global Jewish conspiracy theories. Despite its debunking, similar claims remain. Wistrich argues that these theories rely on cultural perceptions, stereotypes, and lack actual proof, necessitating full knowledge and critique. Jewish conspiracy theories, frequently driven by anti-Semitic impulses, lead to horizontal conflicts in society (Madisson et al., 2021; Mashuri et al., 2019).

Indeed, contemporary conflicts are urban based, centered on controlling enormous amounts of data through information technology. Power dynamics center around the supremacy of big data, with those in control having the potential to impact globally through information weaponry. This weapon may take the shape of communication channels anchored in social networking, functioning as effective tools for phatic and affective communication dissemination. (Livingstone et al., 2018; Madisson & Ventsel, 2018; Ventsel, 2016). In this regard, the information environment is a target for the construction and distribution of transmedia narratives used to influence the psychological decision-making processes of the audience. Nissen (2015) states that the information environment encompasses three interrelated dimensions (physical, information, and cognitive) that interact with each other. The information dimension dictates 'the physical dimension', which reveals "where and how information is collected, processed, stored, disseminated, and protected. In the cognitive dimension, information is transmitted and received, as well as reacted to and acted upon" (*Ibid*, p. 24).

It is apparent that the information environment, along with its conflicts, has become a battleground of information warfare involving information disseminators (e.g., influencers) and their narrative strategies. Information warfare can be defined as "any actions taken to defend the information-based processes, information systems, and military communication networks and to destroy, neutralize, or exploit analogous opponent capabilities in the physical, information, and cognitive

domains” (Brazzoli 2007, p. 219). Niekerk and Maharaj (2013) assert that information warfare involves both military and non-military uses, including tactics, strategies, and operations of influence. These include methods such as suasion, phatic communication, and the use of empty signifiers devoid of substance, which are wielded as weapons to transmit information. For instance, phatic communication is applied to identify target audiences and their social media usage patterns. Additionally, the use of suasive language, rather than persuasive, is regarded as a powerful tool for retaining group identities and ideologies on certain issues (Madisson et al., 2021). This strategy has the potential impact to promote systemic cognitive bias through collective memory networks, ultimately eroding faith in mainstream media and government policies (Mashuri et al., 2016).

Eco (1990) argues conspiracy narratives as narratives leveraging information voids and ambiguities to generate alternate interpretations, serving as a “creature of the story.” He regards these narratives as resolutions to the audience’s fears about the world. This perspective corresponds Lotman’s (2000) notion that majority groups typically embrace global conspiracy theories, feeling plagued by external forces. Yudithadewi and Parikesit (2020) show how controversies over the design of ornaments for Indonesia’s 75th independence anniversary reflects societal divisions. Lotman’s cultural semiotics prove beneficial in deciphering meaning inside cultural symbols and texts.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a vivid process and patterns of meaning-making creation (semiosis) that are shared, produced, and reproduced by social media influencers in the creation of new meaning (Lotman, 2000). Such persons are at the forefront of the meaning-making process, spreading messages to audiences with different levels of knowledge, socio-cultural backgrounds, religion, and economics, which ideally should educate the nation and avoid crippled epistemology related to knowledge through their platform. While social media influencers play a crucial role in spreading messages to diverse audiences, promoting education, and avoiding crippled epistemology, critical and wise readers distinguish between rumors and facts, check the veracity of information, suppress cognitive biases, and prioritize dialogical discussions.

It is crucial to prioritize critical thinking abilities for young folks in navigating narratives and strategic

communications (Ventsel, 2016), especially addressing erroneous conspiracy theories. A fundamental idea is incorporating transmedia platforms into educational approaches centered upon critical thinking. The ongoing enhancement of mental resources is emphasized through key strategies: adopting an open mindset (Muller, 2020) to view crises as transformative opportunities, fostering open meaning creation through dialogic discussions (Lotman, 2005) to counteract the ‘echo chamber effect’, addressing cognitive bias syndrome by cultivating a growth mindset (Duckworth, 2016), and advocating for collaboration among stakeholders to curb the spread of unfounded theories through social media platforms (Fadilah, 2018; Livingstone et al., 2018). Mass efforts to develop platforms to counter baseless information are considered indispensable.

Future research could concentrate on the voices of the audience or commentators regarding posts on social media. This aligns with Eco’s (2005) concept of reader modelling regarding their responses to conspiracy theory issues. A focus on the critical thinking of the audience would provide a distinctive perspective in conspiracy theory-related research. Additionally, field research in the form of case studies or ethnography holds considerable promise for exploring participants’ ideas on conspiracies based on their individual and societal group perspectives. This aligns with Lotman’s (1990) concept of cultural semiotics, emphasizing the views of ‘We-center’ and ‘They-peripheral’ individuals or groups. Their voices would bring unique nuances to the discussion.

Errors in being too eager or too reluctant to believe in conspiracy ideas reflect two weaknesses in thinking, namely ‘paranoia’ and ‘naivety’ (Coady, 2006). Both are considered vices in understanding, while the attitude that avoids both is termed ‘realism’. In this sense, realism might be regarded as a balanced and reasonable stance, not overly suspicious (paranoia) or overly trusting (naivety) of conspiracy theories. It suggests a fair and balanced assessment of information without leaning excessively towards scepticism or unthinking acceptance.

REFERENCES

- Atton, C. (2006). Far-right media on the internet: Culture, discourse and power. *New Media & Society*, 8 (4), 573–587. doi:10.1177/1461444806065653
- Atton, C. (2002). *Alternative Media*. London: Sage Publications.
- Ballinger, D. (2011). *Conspiratoria: The internet and the logic of conspiracy theory*. [Unpublished Doctoral Thesis]. The University of Waikato, the Department

- of Screen and Media Studies: Barkun.
- Benkler, Y., Faris, R., and Roberts, H. (2018). *Network propaganda: Manipulation, disinformation, and radicalization in American politics*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Brazzoli, M., S. (2007). Future prospects of information warfare and particularly psychological operations. In: *South African Army Vision 2020*, (ed. L. le Roux). Pretoria (pp. 217-232): Institute for Security Studies.
- Coady, D. (2006). An introduction of philosophical debate about conspiracy theories. In (Eds. David Coady). *Conspiracy theories: The philosophical debate (pp.1-11)*. New York: Routledge
- Duckworth, A. (2016). *Grit: The power of passion and perseverance*. New York, NY: Scribner
- Eco, U. (2005). *Lector in Fabula*. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- Eco, U. (1990). *Interpretation and overinterpretation*. Cambridge: World, History, Texts Tanner Lectures.
- Fadilah, E., Widiati, U., Latief, M. (2019). Reading dynamic patterns of silence as a communication strategy and impediment in the EFL classroom interaction. *International Journal of Instruction*, 12(4), 183-200. doi:10.29333/iji.2019.12412a.
- Fadilah, E. (2018). Rethinking the maintenance of CLT in Indonesia: A response to: Ariatna's (Vol. 7, No. 2, 2016) "The need for maintaining CLT in Indonesia". *TESOL Journal*, 9 (1), 224-236. doi: 10.1002/tesj.341.
- Habermas, J. (1998). *Inclusion of the other: Studies in political theory*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Hardin R. (2002). The crippled epistemology of extremism. In Breton A., Galeotti G., Salmon P., Wintrobe R. (Eds.), *Political extremism and rationality* (pp. 3–22). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence Culture. Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: NYU Press
- Jenkins, H. (March 21st, 2007). Transmedia Storytelling 101 [Blog post]. Confessions of an Aca-fan. http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2007/03/transmedia_storytelling_101.html
- Laclau, E. & Mouffe, C. (1985). *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics*. London: Verso.
- Leone, M., Madisson, M-L & Ventsel, A. (2020). Semiotic approaches to conspiracy theories. In: *Routledge handbook of conspiracy theories 1st Edition*, (eds. M. Butter; P. Knight). New York: Routledge, 43–54. Doi:10.4324/9780429452734-1_3
- Livingstone, S.& Nassetta, J. (2018). Framing and strategic narratives: Synthesis and analytical framework. *SAIS Review of International Affairs*, 38 (2), 101–110. doi: 10.1353/sais.2018.0020
- Lotman, J. (1982). The text and the structure of its audience. *New Literary History*, 14 (1), 81–87. doi:10.2307/468958
- Lotman, J. (2000). *Universe of the mind: A semiotic theory of culture*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Lotman, J. (2007). *Fear and confusion: Essays in cultural semiotics*, (ed. M. Lotman). Tallinn: Varrak
- Lotman, J. & Clark, W. (2005). On semiosphere. *Sign Systems Studies*, 33 (1), 205–22. doi:10.12697/SSS.2005.33.1.09
- Lotman, J. & Uspenskij, B. (1978). On the semiotic mechanism of culture. *New Literary History*, 9 (2), 211–232. doi:10.2307/468571
- Madisson, M-L. (2016). NWO conspiracy theory: A key frame in online communication of Estonian extreme right. *Lexia*, 23/24, 189–208. doi:10.4399/978885489931511
- Madisson, M-L. & Ventsel, A. (2016). Autocommunicative meaning making in online communication of Estonian extreme right. *Sign Systems Studies*, 44 (3), 326–354. doi:10.12697/SSS.2016.44.3.02
- Madisson, M-L. & Ventsel, A. (2018). Groupuscular identity-creation in online communication of estonian extreme right. *Semiotica*, 222, 25–46. doi:10.1515/sem-2016-0077
- MariaPesch, A. (2021) Semiotic landscapes as constructions of multilingualism – a case study of two kindergartens. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 29 (3), 363-380. doi: 10.1080/1350293X.2021.1928725
- Madisson, M-L. & Ventsel, A. (2021). *Strategic conspiracy narratives: A semiotic approach*. New York: Routledge.
- Marthasari, M. (2023). *Permainan Viral "Lato-Latto", Ketahui Asal Usul dan Manfaatnya*. Retrieved March 24, 2023, from kompasiana.com website: https://www.kompasiana.com/milamrth/63abe19aa196e3267b79c082/permain_
- Mashuri A, Putra IE, Kavanagh C, Zaduqisti E, Sukmawati F, Sakdiah H, Selviana S. (2022). The socio-psychological predictors of support for post-truth collective action. *J Soc Psychol*, 162(4), 504-522. doi:10.1080/00224545.2021.1935678.
- Mashuri, A., & Zaduqisti, E. (2019). Explaining Muslims' aggressive tendencies towards the West: the role of negative stereotypes, anger, perceived conflict, and Islamic fundamentalism. *Psychology and Developing Societies*, 31(1), 56–87. doi:10.1177/0971333618819151.
- Mashuri, A., Zaduqisti, E., Sukmawati, F., Sakdiah, H., & Suharini, N. (2016). The role of identity subversion in structuring the effects of intergroup threats and negative emotions on belief in

- anti-west conspiracy theories in Indonesia. *Psychology and Developing Societies*, 28(1), 1–28. doi:10.1177/0971333615622893
- Mouffe, C. (2005). *On the political*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Nadzir, I. (2020). Conspiracy theories and modern disjuncture amidst the spread of Covid-19 in Indonesia. *Masyarakat Indonesia*, 46 (2), 150-167. doi: 10.14203/jmi.v46i2.909
- Nissen, T. E. (2015). *The weaponization of social media: Characteristics of contemporary conflicts*. Copenhagen: Royal Danish Defence College.
- O’Loughlin, Ben; Miskimmon, Alister; Roselle, Laura (2017). Strategic narratives: Methods and ethics. In: *Forging the world: Strategic narratives and international relations*, (eds. A. Miskimmon; B. O’Loughlin; L. Roselle). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 23–55.
- Reid, A. (2010) Jewish-conspiracy theories in Southeast Asia, *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 38, 373-385. doi:10.1080/13639811.2010.513848
- Semenenko, A. (2016). Homo polyglottus: Semiosphere as a model of human cognition. *Sign Systems Studies* 44 (4), 494–510. doi:10.12697/SSS.2016.44.4.02
- Spasova, K. (2018). Authentic and heterogeneous mimesis: Reflection and self-reflexivity in Todor Pavlov and Yuri Lotman. *European Slavic Studies Journal*, 20, 70-96. doi: 10.13137/2283-5482/22383.
- Niekerk, V-B., Maharaj, M. (2013). Social media and information conflict. *International Journal of Communication*, 7, 1162–1184.
- Uscinski, J. E. (2019). Down the rabbit hole we go. In (ed. Joseph E. Uscinski). *Conspiracy theories and the people who believe them*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Ventsel, A. (2016). Political potentiality of conspiracy theories. *Lexia*, 23/24, 309–326. doi:10.4399/978885489931519
- Wirawan, G.B.S., & Mahardani, P.N.T.Y., Cahyani, M.R.K, Laksmi, N.L.P.S.P., & Januraga, P.P. (2021). Conspiracy beliefs and trust as determinants of Covid-19 vaccine acceptance in Bali, Indonesia: Cross-sectional study. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 180. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2021.110995
- Wistrich, R. (2004). Anti-zionism and anti-semitism. *Jewish Political Studies Review*, 16(3/4), 27–31. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25834602>
- Yudithadewi, D. & Parikesit, B. (2020). Inner dan outer space dalam kontroversi “Salib” pada ornamen 75 tahun kemerdekaan. *Jurnal Komunikasi*, 15, 49-58. doi:10.20885/komunikasi.vol15.iss1.art4.
- Žižek, S. (2002). *Welcome to the desert of the real! five essays on September 11 and related dates*. London ; New York :Verso.
- Žižek, S. (1989). *The sublime object of ideology*. London: Verso.