

DYNAMICS OF MARXISM BEFORE AND AFTER THE DIGITAL ERA

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Abstract

This paper explains the role of the mass media. In this digital era, almost all people know or use this media to receive or seek various information, which is undoubtedly unlimited. In this digital era, everything is advanced from technology increasingly being developed over time—speed in its delivery from the source to the broader community. Without limitation, the information can be spread among countries—the large variety of media platforms available. Now, of course, the media are also a political tool. Not left behind in the discussion of this paper regarding the policies of Marxism.

Keywords: Digital Era, Information, Media, Marxism

DOI: 10.33541/sp.v20i1.2423

Sociae Polites : Majalah Ilmiah Sosial Politik

Faculty of Social and Political Science, Universitas Kristen Indonesia

ISSN 1410-3745 print/ ISSN 2620-4975 online

Volume 22, Number 2 (July-December 2021)

Pages 149-162

1. Introduction

It has become a necessity to use technology in this advanced age, almost every day. Of course, the average person uses a smartphone or other electronic device to communicate or find information and receive news for easy access to various kinds of information. The media is our primary source to get this information. The notion of Marxism, which involves the digital era, is a case in many countries, and the same is happening in Indonesia. All media users from various backgrounds, students, workers, and various other members of society. Media contribution is sufficient and significant to construct political awareness, understanding, and social behavior among the people, including how the media influence people's political action.

Some of the communication experts, such as Katz, Gurevitch, and Hass, identified five groups of needs in terms of media use: cognitive needs, affective needs, integrative needs, and the need to strengthen contact with family, friends, and the outside world. The need to release tension. Following are several types of media functions according to Marshall Mc Luhan, Dissemination/theory of persuasion and information. Mass media diffuses information and persuade. In information theory, mass communication consists of systems that convey information continuously and sequentially.

According to the Political Scientist Murray Edelman, in differentiating information, argued that due to mass political communication, especially games semantic political information. With this function, the mass media can raise awareness, change the attitudes, public opinion, or perception about a particular topic. Public perception, because of the influence of mass media coverage, can be positive and negative depending on how the thoughts are formed in people's minds after receiving information about some issues or topics.

Marx divided society into an economic base and a superstructure consisting of a legal, political, and ideological level. The relationship between the two is characterized by the determination in the last instance by economic abscissa. There is a "relative autonomy" of the superstructure concerning the base and reciprocal action between base and superstructure. The problem with using this method is that the explanation of the reproduction process tends to be descriptive rather than theoretical. Marx believed that the state was an engine of repression that guaranteed the ruling class's domination over the proletariat/working class. According to Lazarsfeld and Merton, mass media and performing informative and entertainment functions also perform the role of affirming social norms and conferring status.

Since the media have several essentially vital functions, public concerns about how the media can manipulate people to achieve certain goals arise. The media can also be controlled by economic groups who have a particular interest in ensuring the submission of the society to the social and economic status quo - the ruling class according to the term Marxism - which will ultimately silence social criticism and the ability of the audience to think critically. Media institutions also have income controlled by political institutions, owners of capital, or the state against the middle ground or heartland that comes from the consensus. The superstructure/basis model applied to media studies is associated with media ownership and control. This view was criticized by the Althusserian Marxist who advocated "the relative autonomy of the superstructure that respects the basis and the reciprocal action of the superstructure on a basis" according to this view. The mass media are relatively autonomous from economic terminology.

Under the influence of Althusser, Stuart Hall, and other "culturalist" Marxists, they rejected the superstructure/base formulation. They believed there was a dialectic between what Marx said was social being and social consciousness.

The primary key of Marxist theory is "materialist," which determines the consciousness of social beings. Following this view, the ideological position is a function of the class position and the dominant ideology in society, namely the ideology of the dominant class. This is in contrast to the "idealist" view, which emphasizes consciousness. Marxists themselves differ on this point, some interpreting the relationship between social being and consciousness as direct determination while others emphasize dialectical relations. In fundamentalist Marxism, ideology is seen as false consciousness, resulting from an emulation of the dominant ideology.

Mass media's function is to spread the dominant ideology, namely the values of the classes that own and control the media. Then in the Marxist media analysis, media institutions are considered a form bound to the power structure and, consequently, act through cooperation with institutions that are dominant in society. The media present the institution's prevailing view, not as one among several alternative perspectives, but as the center of the dominating perspective. Althusser's theory introduces a concept, namely, the concept of interpellation, which is used to explain the political function of mass media texts. Subjects (viewers, listeners, readers) are constructed by text, and the strength of the mass media lies in their ability to position the subject in such a way as to present the realities of daily life. There are differences in schools of thought in Marxist media theory. Michael Gurevitch and his colleagues mentioned three contending paradigms, namely, structuralist, political, and culturalist. Also, John Lyle (2000) in his critical theory mentions some of the strengths of critical media theory;

1. Business - big business and government work together.
2. Profits are the most basic.
3. To a certain extent, the mass media are controlled by big business groups and the government.
4. Many mass media are unimaginative, sensational, and slanted towards the authorities.
5. Media theory is critical of the abuse of power.

Critical theory exposes the myth of value-free social science. The Marxist perspective directs our attention to the issue of economic and political interests of the mass media. This social inequality is displayed in the media (the media favors the ranking class). The ideological analysis helps us expose the reality offered in media texts as a site of struggle for the meaning of ideology and open up opposing readings.

2. Literature Review

The field for Internet Studies has been going around for a few years, continuing itself to become more and more relevant as the years went by, especially now in the present where the internet has already become a dominant part of our daily lives, furthermore influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and forced everyone to have this quarantined lifestyle. Internet Studies shows to be more relevant by the present when almost everything circulates the internet; some examples could be working from home (WFH), online classes that students have to take, even the United Nations Conferences has also adapted this quarantined lifestyle by having the countries record their speeches to be then shown to the conference.

Even politics is not an exception to the internet. Social media has been a medium for political issues since a few years back, and now it has also taken political movements onto this medium. There are many cases of how a lot of issues would show themselves to society through this platform, and few popular topics would be the Black Lives Matter movement and the recent application for UU Cipta Kerja in Indonesia. These political issues most of the time spread through the platform of social media, usually Twitter, where the users would always try to trend the problems with hashtags and flooded Twitter with their opinions regarding the matter, hence making the hashtag even more popular and seen by various people, making the case more known to everyone.

There have been a lot of articles discussing the relevance between the internet and political movements. One example that we found is a journal by Yarimar Bonilla and Jonathan Rosa, talking about a digital protest in the United States. There is also an article by Leticia Bode about learning politics with social media, but there has not been a notable journal regarding Marxism in the Digital Era, aside from a few journals by Christian Fuchs trying to connect Marxism with Internet Studies; which has a more general discussion compared to our paper. C. Fuchs mainly discussed contemporary capitalism; despite how old Marxism theory and the problem of capitalism have been, capitalism only grew more and more as a problem following the generation. That is how the theory can still be a tool to learn the issue at hand.

Our paper focuses more on how Marxism moves around in social media platforms. We will also discuss the comparison between Marxism before the internet and after the internet. Marxism lurks inside social media recently now that more people have access to it, adding to the condition of COVID-19 and quarantined lifestyle, even people that were too busy to use social media has started to get in touch with the platform and use it in their daily lives to stay in touch for work matters and even social interactions. Twitter would be one example of this matter. There are many tweets and threads going around regarding issues around the world, spreading awareness to a lot of users.

Social media has been the platform for politics since a while ago and could be seen in how the journals regarding the matter date back to around 2015-ish. But the scale and scope of the audience became larger recently because not only people who are initially into politics would share and tweet about the problem. People who use Twitter only for their hobbies have become more aware of the world's issues. The talk about "K-pop stans" political activism on the internet has already been discussed in many news media and articles, examining how these K-pop stans have become a part of political discussion in the United States one article in *The Diplomat* mentioned. There is also a news article from CNN about these K-pop stans working together to make the issue about Omnibus Law in Indonesia trending worldwide.

The way this activism works in a way could be defined as Marxism. Quoting from *International Relations Theories* by Tim Dunne; "Marxism was not the objective truth of history, but was rather a way of telling the story of history from within a capitalist historical context, a story which could lead people to consider possible post-capitalist futures and ask themselves how, together, they might get there from here." This sentence regarding Marxism tells that Marxism is about how to get from the current situation to a different one. The book also mentioned a theory by the same person, Antonio Gramsci, a theory of sovereignty as a subtle form of political power that relied more strongly upon consent than coercion. Marxism is a movement to go against this hegemony. K-pop stans on Twitter usually have a lot of followers of the same interest, and they use this to their advantage and spread the awareness of the issues, persuading their followers to stop being

apathetic towards politics and start to be more aware of problems that would affect everyone as a whole indirectly or directly, sooner or later.

In comparison with the old Marxism by the original Karl Marx, the theory was only applicable for the class system back in the old days, dating back to around the 19th to 20th century. This old theory of Marxism focuses on the aspect of bourgeois and proletariat classes. The element of the movement is the same; the concept of Marxism theory is to make a movement against the norm, or even in some other philosopher's perspective, the movement itself is a form of Marxism, regardless of what the movement is fighting. The original theory from Karl Marx was mostly about the movement of the proletariat fighting against the bourgeois for equality, or in other terms, communism against capitalism, where classes of society do not exist, and every human race lives equally with equal standing. The capitalism problem, however, is still ongoing even to the present day. Although the social class system is not too visible, it still exists subconsciously, unlike in the past. Marxism theory also evolved, and various philosophers took the essence of the movement aspect in view and created Neo-Marxism.

The Battle of Cripple Creek happened because of a huge labor surplus. The mine owners, in January 1894, proclaimed that the working day would increase from eight hours to nine and 10—with no increase in pay. However, the owners did offer an alternative. Workers could keep the eight-hour day for a reduction of 50 cents in their daily income. This angered the Western Federation of Miners (WFM), and they opposed both plans. Miners set up roving picket lines and closed most of the mines, showing what solidarity is all about.

The definition of the digital era, which was utilized during the writing of this paper, was the definition of the digital age by IGI Global. The Digital era is the shift from the industrial revolution to the new domination of the economy, a period where digital technologies are critical and irreplaceable in shaping and regulating many things within the society, which happened in the 21st century.

3. Research Methods

The internet and social media have made a significant impact on the field of studies. As such, the virus called COVID-19 emerges; obtaining information and data has some changes. From the basics of face-to-face interviews to more modern and digital data and information gathering, such as social media as a mediator for gathering data, information, and others. Some methods stay as it is, like books, journal, news, and official statement. This essay's research method is mostly composed of research from books, websites, social media, journals, and some official announcements.

The increase in internet usage is not only for social media, studies, and research purposes. It is also utilized as a medium where politicians can engage in a conversation or a political conversation. Even so, the internet is a medium where political issues can resurge and emerge without warning.

The internet has evolved since its beginnings, and its influence on politics has changed due to the rise of the many new digital platforms. Today the internet offers a variety of tools that can influence politics. This evolution produces different effects, to which researchers quickly provide further analyses. The internet or social media is an important channel of communication through political communities or individuals, as simple as the community member and the public can provide information about their thoughts and activity. This meant that an individual or the organization could give out

information and expression through it as the media hosts many different political spectra, such as the left and the right. By this, researchers and politicians can know what kind of people they are fighting.

Marxism, it is one of the furthest far-right movement there are in the world. This ideology has changed from the old type of Marxism to the whole new Marxism concept called Neo-Marxism. As from its name, Neo-Marxism does not drift away far from its original idea. In the most sophisticated version of neo-Marxism, that of Cohen, 'there is ... a conflict between social equality and the liberty of some people,' but that should not stand in the way of 'the pursuit of social equality since a humane concern for liberty must first of all direct itself to the condition of those who enjoy hardly any of it.

4. Results and Discussions

International relation is a critical study to understand what was happening in the relations within and outside the state. As such, there will be many theories that could be used to realize a particular occurrence. One of them is the conflict theory. The conflict theory was created to help understand the complicated conflict within and outside the state.

Conflict can happen at any time and anywhere. One of the theories that could be said to be widely known and often utilized to understand how a conflict can occur is the theory of Marxism. Many experts have tried to define their own understanding of Marxism during the years, and Antonio Gramsci was not an exception. According to him, Marxism is a movement to go against hegemony. The definition that he used as hegemony is that hegemony is a subtle form of political power. In simple term, the theory of Marxism itself has been used as a way to describe and explain any action that is done by an individual or a group of people who are trying to go and take action against something that has been or soon to be established and bring about the changes that particular individual or group intended to make. The Marxist movement was believed to have happened within the original Marxism due to the differences between classes, which were often differentiated by the term bourgeois and proletariat. It is very different from the current definition of Marxist, as could be seen from the understanding Antonio Gramsci has towards Marxism which has been mentioned previously. Since the past, there are many Marxist movements which has the purpose of changing the convention, one of the earliest examples is the battle of Cripple Creek which happened in 1894 while the newest example could be seen in the demonstration that was held against the plan to implement Omnibus Law which just had happened recently in Indonesia at the time of writing.

Not long after Karl Marx wrote his theory of Marxism, the first wave of the Marxist movement happened in Europe. The movement brought about the France Revolution and many workers' movements in Europe, bringing many changes to the system that had already existed at the time. Not only France Revolution, but the theory could also explain the chain reactions that happened at the time. One of the examples would be the Russian revolution. During those times, the class could not be removed from the people's lives, binging about many discrimination in treatment for the bourgeois and the proletariat. This continued to lead to many Marxist movements, which brought effect and changes to the past, which assisted in forming today's society.

As technology advances, so does the Marxist movements and the theory also continued to be enhanced to suit the situation and development in society. Before the invention of the modern communication method, the means to pass information from

person to person are minimal. Moreover, during those times, mishaps may also happen. Before the invention of modern communications, there are many traditional means of conveying information. Whether the information would be reliable or credible would depend on the means of communication. Some of those conventional means are private letters, mass media, private or public phone, and direct contact. When using the personal letters, according to how it was sent out, it may need several days, weeks, or even months before the letter reached the receiver.

There is also a possibility of the letter getting lost or damaged due to mishaps and lost in the worst-case scenario. If using a messenger bird, it can get shot midway by hunters, eaten by wild animals, or lost in one way or another, even when sending it from the post office, it may not necessarily mean that the letter will not be lost somewhere during the sorting or transporting. When using private or public telephones, there is no guarantee that the receiver also has access to a phone at all times, especially since telephones are usually owned by the wealthy and privileged during those times. By using word of mouth, the information passed may not necessarily be the same as the original without any changes. The mass media can only pass on information passed through various screening by the person in charge of keeping an eye on the flow of information. It could be seen how the flow of information is minimal and sometimes even restricted by both human-made and natural causes.

The Marxist movement during such an era to be formed, could be said to be more problematic in comparison to the present Marxist movement. Their movements were done to go against the decision of the people in power. In this aspect, both the past and present have the same intention. Nevertheless, the start and process of how the movements themselves formed greatly differed. The Marxist movement in the past started with the knowledge that many people share the same opinion that goes against the current convention, but the process took longer than that of the present. For example, we are going to take the case of the battle of Cripple Creek. The case started on the first of February 1894, when the mine owners wanted to increase the working time, but at the same time, they do not wish to have an extra expense, which resulted in the same amount of wages. With the same amount of pay, the workers were expected to work two more hours every day. If the workers wanted to reject and continue to work for 8 hours, there was an available choice, but there will be a reduction of 50 cents in their daily pay, from three dollars to two dollars and fifty cents. The union president, John Calderwood, issued a notice so that the previous working hours and wage would be reinstated, but the mine owners did not respond even after six days had passed. The Western Federation of Miners rejected both of the notions, and after not receiving any reply, on the seventh of February, the workers under the federation went on a strike. They closed most of the mines, which rejected the notice and showed their solidarity against the oppression of the bourgeois. Some of them went on a strike while others continued to work and give ten percent of their wages to support those who went on the field to complain about the unfair treatment provided by the bourgeois. The union prepared soup kitchens from the donation given to support the strikers. The strike was very effective, and at the beginning of March, most smelters were either closed or running part-time.

The mine owners who continued forcing the ten hours of work a day attempted to open their mines once more, but on the fourteenth of March, the miners received orders from the court not to interfere in the mine operation. With the support given by the government, the mine owners hired strikebreakers. The conflict which started from the wage created immense chaos as the strike soon changed into threats and violence.

Although they managed to drive away from the strikebreakers, the conflict was not yet finished as the violence continued. On the sixteenth of March, a group of armed miners ambushed six sheriff's deputies. Problems continued to arise. Even until May's start, several talks also broke down as the mine owners' offer was not within the Western Federation of Miners' acceptable range. The problem continued until the twelfth of June in the same year after going through many violent conflicts.

With how the information was passed during the time, there was a lot of restriction, making them unable to move quickly. They may discuss with other people, but that may not necessarily mean that they would start a movement right away. As they conferred with one another and continued to discuss with many people, they slowly discovered more people who have the same opinion. Moreover, the possibility of the movement to be significant enough to move in several regions would need more preparation time. Their information campaign will be significantly hindered by their limited communication method, making it hard to discuss the movement. This can be seen like how within the case above, the only ones involved in the strike were only those who were located within and around the region or members of the Western Federation of Miners themselves.

The Marxist movement, which happened after the spread of rapid technological advancements, could be said to be impactful in a way. As the speed that information can be transferred continues to progress and how almost everything could be received simultaneously, it was sent using the internet no matter how far away a person is. It is straightforward for people to gain information. With many search engines available and how widespread the usage of the internet is, they might still get informed about specific information or movement, although actively looking to get access to that information is something that people might not necessarily do.

In the latest data collected by the World Bank, 49% of the people of the world are using the internet during the year 2017, and according to Statista, in the year 2020, the total users of the internet reached 59% of the entire world population. The increase of 10% number of users within three years could be said to show how broad the reach of the internet is at this very moment. Along with the increasing advancement of the internet, it was no wonder a lot of people created companies using the internet as a basis. One of the many companies that were very popular at present would be the company that ran social media sites on the internet. With how many social media company giants exist up until the present times, it could show how there is a lot of internet user that uses the social media platform to connect with many people whether they are from the area or even from the other part of the world. Although there are still some restrictions created by the government or the company, with the high influx of information entering the system at all times, it was almost impossible to keep an eye out for every information which is being inputted into the system, which results in some lag in the monitoring processes itself. Within that lag, the information shared might have already been read by millions of people before it was finally removed, which enabled the people with similar views to send similar information, which can also be accessed by many people within the timeframe before it was removed once more. Just with these superficial flaws in the system of information, a movement could be started.

With the wide use of social media and popularization of hashtags (#), many movements could be said to start from these hashtags. Especially since social media is free and can be accessed anytime and anywhere by everyone, it became easier to exchange opinions with another person without any limitation of who and where they are. With

how easy it was to exchange views across borders, it is no wonder that movements across borders also existed. For example, the latest movement that could be said to have to go through the border of states is the movement called 'Black Lives Matters.' This movement started with a hashtag and appeared due to being mistreated by other people simply because they are black. This movement was spread all along with the world that even people who are not up to date have at the very least read the hashtag at least once as long as they have accessed the internet.

One of the most recent examples of the Marxist movement, which begins from the social media in Indonesia, is the demonstration of Omnibus Law. The Omnibus Law itself had been talked about since before the topic had trended. President Jokowi had mentioned the matter before in his speech when he got re-elected as the President of Indonesia, but since the law had yet to be made at the time, the people had no qualms about it. The people's dissatisfaction had started to appear when the information regarding the Omnibus Law was leaked to society. Although the law was made in an effort to make the country even better, that does not equal to the people accepting it when they believe their own welfare was affected. The movement happened in many places before the omnibus law was enforced. Since it had been implemented on the fifth of October 2020, the demonstration's frequency and rate also increased along with the increasing dissatisfaction from the people.

The movement continued to happen, and from the 34 provinces in Indonesia, no province was free from the movement. In every province, there were several regions in which the demonstration happened. From the data, according to CNN Indonesia, the peak of the protest about Omnibus Law occurred on the eighth of October 2020. On that particular day, there is 95 act of demonstration which was scattered all over the 34 provinces of Indonesia. Although it had only been the 3rd day after the legalization of the omnibus law, since the communication can go on unhindered by time and distance, the final act could be planned quickly. Some of the actions even originated from Twitter or other social media platforms.

The role of social media platforms cannot be undermined in the slightest. Just by searching the #TolakOmnibusLaw on one popular social media, one can find many discussions about the omnibus law. From the reasoning as to why the law should not be enacted even to the invitation to join in on the demonstration. Many activists wanted to use the online platform as a medium to voice their complaints. Here are some of the examples of the usage of a media platform in allowing the demonstration to keep progressing forward:



With the pictures above as an example, it could be said that the effect brought about by the development of technology seemed to be very considerable. With the development of technology, not only was there a new platform to start a Marxist

movement, but it can also assist the spread of information in making the movement more effective and planned, bringing many people together to create a movement that could transcend the border of the city, province, state, or even continent. As such, the Marxist movements within the digital era can and will be brought out at a bigger scale than the one that has been done in the past.

Moreover, nowadays, there are more and more Marxist movements happening within society. With the many movements existing within the online boundary, there will be chances of two or more groups or movements to intersect. Such is the case where K-Pop stans in Indonesia began to voice their opinion about the Omnibus Law. With them starting to voice their opinion on their social media, many people who, without social media, might never even intersect are able to view the post and create their own opinion. With a single post, the reach became wider and not only involving a group of people or a movement. It may even include other groups and movement which already exist, bringing new heights to the movement that already exist.

Along with the growing population of humanity as a whole year by year since the invention of the internet, more and more people are expressing their opinion online. This not only jams the system, as previously mentioned but also raises the possibility that someone would have a belief that goes against something. This would not be a big of a problem as today since there is significantly less number of people that are able to express their opinion in public freely, even more so those who got no repercussion on their actions that often clearly go against the people in power. The internet, to an extent, provided a wall of safety that gives people the courage to put their opinions to the public even if it is deemed very controversial that will start a movement.

	Non-Digital Era	Digital Era
Scale of Movement	Small, regional	Large, able to transcend the border of the state
Information	Slow, restricted	Fast, less restricted
Platform	Offline	Offline and Online
Time Needed to Plan a Movement	Long	Short
Preparation for the Movement	Complicated	Simple
Reach of the Movement	Regional	Global

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

As explained in the previous segment, Marxist movements have developed along with time. From how it was a conflict that was caused by the difference in classes, it was now a conflict that was created or moved by a person or a group of people to go against an already established consensus that has been made by the people in power. The movement itself always starts from someone who has a contradicting opinion on

something and is willing to express it, in cases where the Marxist movement is done by a group that usually consist of a large number of people. In the case a large number of people were involved, the means to send and receive information became very crucial. The range and speed that the data can cover would be something that will determine the size, effect, or the end result of the movement itself. The speed and range that information can be transferred from one person to another have grown from a simple letter that would take days or even weeks to an email that could almost be instantly sent to the recipient at any time from anywhere. This has changed how many Marxist movements are formed. There is some Marxist movement that begins from the social media that is freely accessible on the internet from all over the world. One such movement is the Black Lives Matter, which recently became a significant issue that has impacted not only where the problem blew up but also the rest of the world.

With the internet as the media, the Marxist movements which exist may no longer stand as a singular group where other groups may not intersect with the movement. This could be seen from how the K-Pop stans joined in to voice their opinion about the Omnibus Law, creating a wave of K-Pop stans who joined in the Marxist movements made against the Omnibus Law. This is very different when compared to the Cripple Creek conflict. The movement itself was not participated by many people; only people and workers who were a member of the Western Federation of Miners got involved with the movement. This difference can further emphasize the contrast of Marxist movements that happened before the digital era and after the digital age.

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