



Vol.2, No.2, August, 2025, pp. 19-24

Journal homepage: http://journal.unesa.ac.id/index.php/commedies/

Political Economy of Media in Spatial Representation of National Geographic Indonesia's Youtube Content

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ABSTRACT

Received: Revised: Accepted: Available online: National Geographic Indonesia is a monthly magazine covering nature, the environment, geography, science, and other topics. Advances in communication technology have led this media outlet to sell its products not only in physical magazines but also through digitalization, changing its sales system to its website. In addition to selling its magazines digitally, National Geographic Indonesia also operates several social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Simply put, the purpose of these websites and social media platforms is to ensure its products reach all audiences across Indonesia and the world. This brief study aims to determine how National Geographic Indonesia spatializes political economy through its broadcasts on National Geographic Indonesia's YouTube videos. The method used is content analysis of text and YouTube videos. The results show that the concept of political economy spatialization in both videos was discovered by analyzing the video content based on the broadcasts and text or sentences within the videos. The spatialization context in the video is distinguished by several aspects, including spatial representation, the commodification of space and resources, political economy, space as an ideological construct, and spatialization and distribution chains.

Keywords: Political Economy, Spatialization, National Geographic Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Print media is closely linked to the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in 1456. During its development, print media was known as press media or newspapers, whose production was paper-based. Based on paper, Gutenberg's printing press could synergize harmoniously to create an information medium that presented news in a pleasant and easy-to-read format, thus providing significant benefits to society. Print media has the advantage of enhancing human intellect (AR, 2018:84).

Besides newspapers, another form of print media is magazines. Magazines are a type of mass media with many specialized categories, such as women's magazines, fashion magazines, business magazines, geographic magazines, and other types of magazines. Magazines are a particularly effective medium for providing detailed products and conveying information (Hapsari et al., 2023:90).

Typically, magazines target a specific readership, such as those aimed at children, teenagers, adult women, or general readers ranging from teenagers to adults. Some characteristics of magazines include: in-depth information presentation, longer coverage, more images

or photos, and a compelling cover (Silviani et al., 2021:64). National Geographic, a magazine-shaped print media outlet, is one that has a wide international distribution. Originally an American monthly magazine published by National Geographic Partners, National Geographic focuses on a variety of topics, including geography, history, nature, science, and culture. Its primary purpose is to inspire and educate readers about the world and protect its wonders. Over time, National Geographic has also been launched in Indonesia under the name National Geographic Indonesia. The magazine was inaugurated on March 28, 2005, by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, along with Kompas Gramedia CEO Jakob Oetama. National Geographic Indonesia conducts several activities, including deep-sea photography, archaeological exhibitions, jatropha expeditions, and the Indonesian Reef. Other activities include public discussions on photography, conservation, and other topics (nationalgeographic.grid.id).

The development of information and communication technology continues to advance over time. One example is mass communication. Mass communication media are media produced by modern technology. Mass media produce modern technological

products as channels of mass communication. Media is essentially defined as communication using mass media, such as print and electronic media. Meanwhile, mass communication can be defined as the process of communication through mass media (Marlina et al., 2022:89).

Changes in mass media development are also evident in the shift from conventional media to digital media. Television, radio, newspapers, and magazines, which were originally physical, have now shifted to digital forms in the form of websites, social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and so on. In other words, the technological development from physical to digital is called digitalization. Digitalization is the process by which individuals, businesses, and organizations use digital tools to increase the speed, efficiency, and value of their work. Digitalization is considered highly relevant to the business world because it can help save time and create new growth opportunities. On the other hand, digitization is carried out to process, store, and transmit information through digital circuits, equipment, and networks. Digitization facilitates access, preservation, and sharing of information. Essentially, digitization is the process of converting everything into digital format. Ultimately, digitization aims to simplify life and create a more independent business model that promises quality standards and cost efficiency (Afnarius et al., 2024:4).

Digitalization also continues to evolve, as experienced by National Geographic and National Geographic Indonesia. Originally a magazine, National Geographic has transformed its original format into a digital format. National Geographic Indonesia now has several digital platforms, such as a website that not only contains the magazine but also news, freelance photography, exploration journals, and a subscription service, which are essential for the continued operation of the media business. In addition to the website, National Geographic Indonesia also has several other social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and a YouTube channel, all under the name National Geographic Indonesia (national geographic grid.id).

The National Geographic Indonesia YouTube channel is a popular media platform among Indonesians. With video content focused on nature, geography, culture, and the environment, while also addressing issues related to these rights, the channel is appealing to both the general public and those focused on environmental conservation. This is evident in the number of followers or subscribers to the National Geographic Indonesia YouTube channel, which reached 338,000 as of June 2025 (Nat Geo Indonesia YouTube).

YouTube is a video-sharing website. This site allows users to upload, watch, and share videos. Videos found on YouTube include film clips, television clips, music videos, video blogs, educational videos, and many other videos. Most videos on YouTube are uploaded by individuals, and some organizations use YouTube to upload their material to the site as part of a YouTube

partnership. More specifically, YouTube is a place to share videos we like with all its visitors (Atalia, 2019:44).

In today's millennial era, almost everyone is familiar with YouTube. With the ease and sophistication of today's technology, creating and editing videos can be done simply using a mobile phone. Therefore, anyone can upload their videos directly from their phone and enjoy them instantly without any hassle. However, the success of a YouTube channel doesn't just happen. To attract the attention of the general public, so they'll follow and watch the shows presented, the videos must be the best and different from other YouTube channels, making them engaging to watch (Atalia, 2019:44).

Until now, many people access YouTube primarily to watch videos. They watch videos for entertainment. However, YouTube has now evolved and made improvements in several areas. YouTube has expanded into features oriented toward user convenience and ease. Some of the benefits YouTube offers its users include:

- 1) As a means of earning income. YouTube provides its users with the opportunity to earn income. Users can create a channel, upload videos, and then register their channel with Google AdSense. Viewers will pay the channel owner for each ad displayed on the video. This is subject to certain conditions imposed by YouTube, such as having a certain number of subscribers and viewers.
- 2) Providing free services. YouTube generally provides free services to its users to enjoy and access videos entered into its system. To access all types of videos, users do not need to make payments or purchase premium accounts, as is the case with some other applications. Users simply need an internet quota to access YouTube videos.
- 3) As a promotional tool. Promotions are not limited to product sales but also company promotions. Companies create YouTube channels to increase their visibility and recognition among the wider public. In essence, YouTube is very useful for online businesses.
- 4) Catching up on missed shows. Currently, all television stations in Indonesia have their own YouTube channels to document their broadcasts. So, if we miss a show on a television station, we can open their YouTube channel and watch the missed broadcast there.
- 5) Video streaming. YouTube offers its users access to both direct and indirect video streaming. In fact, the programs accessible include not only local television but also national and international television (Atalia, 2019:54).

The National Geographic Indonesia YouTube channel presents documentary content specifically addressing themes of nature, geography, culture, and the environment. This can be seen in the videos broadcast on the channel. Some video titles on the channel include: Mona Kelana di Gunung Merbabu, Todo: Guardian of the Ancestor's Footprint in the Heart of Flores, Liang Bua:

Hobbit Footprints in Flores That Changed History, Minangkabau: Its Natural Culture is a World Paradise, Komodo Island and Its Natural Beauty, and other videos (YouTube Nat Neo Indonesia).

Through the development of information and communication technology, as well as changes and developments in mass media, we can see that the primary purpose of media (audio, visual, and print) is not merely providing information to the public. Therefore, National Geographic Indonesia also develops its products through its website and social media so that videos and other information can continue to be enjoyed by people from various regions in Indonesia and beyond. In addition to revenue generated from magazine subscription sales through its website, National Geographic Indonesia also generates income through its YouTube channel, as one of the benefits of using YouTube is generating income (Atalia, 2019:54).

Mass media plays a vital role in social, political, and economic life. It must also serve as a public space to channel public participation in upholding a democratic system of government. Public space is an integral part of social life, where citizens can debate various issues related to public life and the common good. However, today's media are no longer oriented toward meeting the public's need for wholesome information entertainment, but rather are more focused on capitalist economic profit and competitive market forces. Ultimately, the public is deprived of information that is presented in a way that is both factual and up-to-date. Media coverage is packaged in a manner that utilizes agenda-setting methods. This creates a dilemma for media democracy, between the public and capitalist interests. Meanwhile, the media is used by market interests to generate profits (Poti, 2019).

In this digital era, we know that the rapid development of information, communication, and digital technology has significantly impacted current business development. The rapid development of technology has given rise to the development of digital businesses, where businesses now utilize digitalization in the form of social media as a communication tool. The presence of social media makes it easier for businesses to communicate with consumers/customers. Furthermore, social media is also used as a marketing tool by business owners to develop their businesses. Social media has its own roles in building business communications. These roles include serving as a basis for market research, increasing customer engagement, and as a promotional tool. Furthermore, social media also serves as an intermediary between businesses and customers, enabling them to communicate with each other. The interaction between businesses and customers will create a sense of trust, allowing customers to trust a product. This trust will increase public trust, thus increasing the product's recognition (Aprilia et al., 2023).

National Geographic Indonesia, originally a print media outlet in the form of a monthly magazine, has now, with the advent of technology, focused on selling its products through various digital platforms, particularly YouTube. Through its videos on its YouTube channel, Nat Geo Indonesia, the spatial space in these videos is not solely about geography but is constructed through the choice of locations, how they are depicted, who is featured, and so on. Spatialization in Nat Geo Indonesia's media is a form of spatial selection and narrative. This background motivated researchers to examine, understand, and analyze the spatialization within Nat Geo Indonesia's YouTube content.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this mini-research, the researcher also reviewed several journals for comparison and later reference in writing this research article. The researcher compared journals with the same theme, namely the study of political economic spatialization, including the journal published by Subandi and Teguh in 2018 entitled " Komodifikasi, Spasialisasi, dan Strukturasi dalam Media Baru di Indonesia. " This research was conducted using Vincent Mosco's political economy study. The aim was to examine and critique Vincent Mosco's political economic communication practices, from commodification, spatialization, to structuration related to Line Webtoon's control of content, audiences, and workers, as well as its distribution and market share in Indonesia. The method used was a case study. The results of this study indicate that commodification in Line Webtoon consists of the commodification of content, the commodification of workers, and the commodification of audiences. The spatialization captured in this study is the process of Line Webtoon's distribution in Indonesia related to the subject of inappropriate content and the expansion of Naver Corp's business network that incorporated the webdrama "Seventeen" into Line Webtoon Indonesia. Meanwhile, the structuring within Line Webtoon is a pioneer of the first online comic in Indonesia with the largest readership. Line Webtoon, as the hegemony of Japan and Korea over Indonesia, Japan and Korea collaborate to sell products that are truly marketable in Indonesia.

Next is a study conducted by Rabani and Danang in 2019 entitled *Ekonomi Politik Media dalam New Media (Studi Deskriptif Praktik Spasialisasi pada Channel Youtube Atta Halilintar)*.. This study explores the political economy of media with a focus on spatialization. The researchers became interested in conducting research on the Political Economy of Media in new media using a descriptive study method that focused on spatialization practices on Atta Halilintar's YouTube channel. The spatialization practices found include: Atta Halilintar's YouTube channel is integrated with social media, integration with corporate channels, and collaboration with other Indonesian YouTubers.

Next is a study conducted by Sunandar in 2023 entitled *Spasialisasi Media dan Komodifikasi News Gathering pada MNC Media*. This study attempts to analyze the spatialization practices carried out by large media groups and investigate their implications for the commodification of media workers, which in this case focuses on journalists and cameramen under the news gathering division of MNC Media. The theory used is the theory of political economy of media, with the concept of

spatialization as the main gateway to the formation of commodification of media workers and also Foucault's power relations as an analytical instrument that intersects with the theory of the Hierarchy of Influence. The results of the study reveal that spatialization shows the dominance of conglomerates over the media ecosystem. Then this study also produces a categorization of spatialization based on the integration process, namely open, closed and hidden. The application of spatialization results in the commodification of journalists and cameramen with dual duties, uncertain work contracts, minimal wages and demands for adaptation. This commodification is evidence of the exploitation of media workers resulting from labor exploitation, psychological exploitation, economic exploitation, and exploitation of abilities.

The next research with a political econometric approach, specifically related to spatialization, is the study conducted by Nuzuli in 2020, entitled Spasialisasi Sony Music Entertainment Indonesia. Changes in the production process were made to align with political economy and market approaches. This study aims to examine political economy practices, specifically spatialization, at Sony Music Entertainment Indonesia. This research is a qualitative descriptive study with a case study approach. Primary data sources were obtained through interviews, while secondary data sources were obtained from documentation, literature studies, and media. The results indicate that Sony Music Entertainment practices spatialization supported Indonesia digitalization, facilitating horizontal and vertical company integration to dominate the Indonesian market.

Next, a study conducted by Hilmansyah in 2023, Spasialisasi dan Indikasi Konglomerasi Perusahaan Media Trans Corp aims to uncover and identify the processes of aggregation and spatialization at Trans Corp. Conglomeration and spatialization are used to strengthen dominance through the impact spatialization. The research approach used is a qualitative description of Vincent Mosco's critical paradigm of Political Economy of Communication Theory. According to the research findings, Trans Corp's spatialization supports the formation of uncompetitive commercial competitiveness. Trans Corp uses spatialization through horizontal and vertical integration to optimize, strengthen, simplify, and reduce the cost of manufacturing elements for the company's long-term survival. Acquisitions, mergers, and the formation of new business units, both media-related and unrelated, are related to their core capabilities. This incident violates the provisions of Law Number 32 concerning Broadcasting which prohibits monopoly ownership and prioritizes healthy business competition in the broadcasting sector, as well as Law Number 5 concerning the Prohibition of Monopolistic Practices and Unhealthy Business Competition Article 18 Paragraph (1) where spatialization impacts the concept of diversity of ownership. Government policy in this kind of conglomeration must also be firm. The goal is to limit the diversity of ownership which will impact the diversity of content.

Finally, a study conducted by Poernamasari in 2022 entitled Praktik Spasialisasi dalam Industri Line Trend Financial Technology. Corporation: Corporation is a communications media company that initially focused on instant messaging and news aggregator features. However, developments communication and information technology changed over time. This qualitative research employs a case study method. The focus of this research is the development of the new media industry, namely LINE Corporation, and the phenomenon of financial technology. Through a political economy analysis of media, financial technology trends are revealed to have spatialization practices that dominate Asia, particularly in Indonesia, Korea, Japan, Thailand, and Taiwan. Three main classifications were identified: products and services, affiliates, and financial technology services. In the past three years, financial technology has become the most promising business industry strategy. This is the impact of collaboration with capitalist companies that are able to dominate and dominate the market. LINE is getting closer to realizing a digital ecosystem in Indonesia by implementing its tagline "closing the distance," so that there is no longer any disadvantageous distance and time for this industry.

After conducting a review comparing several journals that studied the political economy of media, particularly regarding the entry points of spatialization in various media, the researcher found various results in these studies. To further enhance the reference and understanding of the political economy of media, the following is an explanation of the political economy of media, as well as the political economy of media, specifically the entry points of spatialization according to Vincent Mosco.

In a narrow sense, political economy is the study of social relations, particularly power relations, that mutually shape the production, distribution, and construction of resources, including communication resources. Furthermore, this formulation asks us to focus on how information and even our attention to media become products for sale in the marketplace. This definition directs political economy to understand the operation of power, a concept that addresses how people get what they want even when others don't. It also leads us to consider what it means to be a producer, distributor, or consumer, and to appreciate the growing ambiguity regarding what constitutes these categories (Mosco, 2009:2).

A more general and ambitious definition of political economy is the study of control and survival in social life. Control specifically refers to how societies organize themselves, manage their affairs, and adapt or fail to adapt to the inevitable changes that all societies face. Survival refers to how people produce what they need to produce themselves and keep society running. The strength of this definition lies in its breadth, encompassing at least all human activities or all life processes. Another way to describe political economy is to expand its meaning beyond what is typically considered

in definitions by focusing on a set of key qualities that characterize the approach (Mosco, 2009:2).

The political economy of media is essentially an elaboration of the economics of mass media and the politics of mass media in carrying out their function as social control in society. Mass media act as dignified, independent companies, living off products or services, as well as information from the private sector, government, and even personal sources, through advertorials. Advertising revenue is the lifeblood of mass media, where advertisements in mass media can cover the costs of building editorial buildings, printing equipment, media distribution or marketing, and so on. Mass media require enormous costs to maintain their existence (Yusanto et al., 2024:9).

Spatialization has particular significance for the political economy of communication communication is one of the primary means of realizing spatialization throughout society, and therefore, spatialization makes the communications industry highly significant. Along the way, a closer approach to Karl Marx's concept of spatialization in The Grundrisse (1973) was found, which posits capitalism's tendency to "annihilate space over time." This refers to capitalism's increasing power to utilize and improve means of transportation and communication to shorten the time required to move goods, people, and messages through space, thereby reducing the significance of spatial distance as a constraint on capital expansion. More simply, Mosco argues that space is neither neutral nor natural. In the world of media and communication, space is shaped, controlled, and even commodified for specific economic and political interests. Certain areas are transformed into tourist attractions and symbolically sold through the media. The representation of an area in the media can be used to support narratives of development, conservation, or exploitation (Mosco, 2009:157).

METHODS

This study was conducted to examine how National Geographic Indonesia spatializes political economy through the content of videos broadcast on its YouTube channel. Therefore, the method used in this study was video content analysis (images, audio narration, and text). Content analysis is a specific research technique for conducting textual analysis. This analysis involves reducing text into units (sentences, ideas, images, chapters, magazine front pages, etc.) and then applying a coding scheme to these units to draw inferences about the communication within the text (West & Lynn, 2008:86). Data were collected through observation and downloading videos from the National Geographic Indonesia YouTube channel. Data analysis was conducted by coding themes, which included regions and cultural types, as well as analyzing the spatial construction within the videos.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The video analyzed on the Nat Geo Indonesia YouTube channel was titled "Liang Bua: Hobbit Footprints

in Flores That Changed History." In terms of spatial representation, the video's focal location is Liang Bua Cave in Flores, East Nusa Tenggara. This is represented in the sentence, "In the heart of East Nusa Tenggara, amidst the bustle of life and the green landscape of Flores, a secret hides. A cave, for locals merely a shelter, but for the world, a window into an unexpected past. Its name is Liang Bua." This location highlights an exotic archaeological space with commercial and scientific value.

The choice of a rarely exposed area demonstrates a spatialization strategy to make a remote place the center of a global narrative. The video positions Liang Bua as a cultural and scientific tourism product, sold through the narrative of "hobbit footprints," as well as through the archaeological narrative. According to Mosco, this constitutes a form of commodification of space, where places are packaged as media commodities to gain economic and ideological value.

In the context of political economy, the video depicts several institutions, such as museums, their sponsors, and archaeologists, without highlighting the views of local communities or groups. This is evident in the sentence, "It has sparked controversy and debate among many researchers. Some believe they are modern humans with disease, others believe they are humans with genetic disorders. But ultimately, through research in collaboration with various institutions worldwide, we, Indonesian researchers, have succeeded in disproving the conclusion that the Hopens are indeed a new human species distinct from modern humans with disease." This means that the video reflects the dominance of powerful institutions over narratives.

The video supports Indonesia's tourism agenda and global image by focusing on scientific narratives, conservation, and world heritage. The representation of the cave as a "hobbit trail" creates a relatively neutral scientific discourse that supports both scientific and tourism imagery. This can be seen from the sentence "In 2003, in the depths of this silent cave a discovery shook the world of paleontology," another sentence is "Liang Bua, a cave in Flores has whispered a story that changes perspective. It reminds us that evolution is an unpredictable process..." In addition, in the context of spatialization and distribution chain, video production through the official National Geographic Indonesia channel and global distribution via YouTube shows the media's capability to create a digital spatialization chain by producing videos locally (making videos with a distinctive theme of Nat Geo Indonesia), then distributing them digitally globally (through the official Nat Geo Indonesia YouTube channel), and the result is getting added economic value through advertising (Adsense), branding, and sponsorship.

The next video analyzed was a video broadcast on the National Geographic Indonesia YouTube channel titled "Maghilewa Traditional Village, Flores, East Nusa Tenggara." In the context of spatial representation, this video highlights the Maghilewa Traditional Village in Flores, East Nusa Tenggara, which is depicted as a rich and exotic cultural space. This is evident in the video's

sentence, "Exploring the beauty of the Maghilewa traditional village, Aimire. In the heart of the enchanting island of Flores, lies a lasting cultural gem. A traditional village that defies the ravages of time, standing strong, passing down traditions from generation to generation." Furthermore, hashtags (#) were found in the video's description, such as: #kampungadat #flores #nusatenggaratimur, highlighting Maghilewa not only as a tourist destination but also as a space for indigenous community identity.

In the context of the commodification of space and resources, the video packages Maghilewa cultural identity as a visual and educational attraction ready for audience consumption. The words or phrases "Maghilewa Traditional Village" and the emphasis on cultural richness are present in hashtags and promotions, making it an object of commercialization. In the political economy context, veiled information about funding or facilities, from the National Geographic team to the editors and production crew, as well as the need for local support, can be seen. The video is professionally produced, with the names of the production team at the beginning or end of the video, indicating a corporately organized production structure or a reflection of capitalist media logic. Finally, in the context of spatialization and distribution chain, this video shows the existence of a distribution chain similar to the previous video analysis, namely producing videos locally (making videos with Nat Geo Indonesia's distinctive theme), then distributing them digitally globally (through the official Nat Geo Indonesia YouTube channel), and the result is getting added economic value through advertising (Adsense), branding, and sponsorship.

CONCLUSION

According to Vincent Mosco, political economy has three main entry points: structuration, spatialization, and commodification. After conducting a simple study of National Geographic Indonesia to observe, understand, and analyze it using the concept of political economy spatialization, spatialization was found in the two videos analyzed. The concept of political economy spatialization in the two videos was discovered by analyzing the video content based on the footage and text or sentences within the videos. The results revealed that the spatialization context in the videos was differentiated into several including spatial representation, aspects, commodification of space and resources, political economy, space as an ideological construct, and spatialization and distribution chains.

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