Beyond the Watchdog: Exploring Sousveillance as an Alternative Form of Media Oversight

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ABSTRACT

Empirical research indicates that the mainstream media in Indonesia frequently fail to serve as effective watchdogs. In contrast, social media platforms facilitate digital democracy by enabling citizens to oversee power structures, although they also increase opportunities for government surveillance. This study aims to assess whether sousveillance can serve as an alternative mechanism for monitoring power when mainstream media do not fulfill their watchdog role by analyzing trends in mainstream media, Twitter, and citizen sousveillance. A mixed-methods approach is employed. The quantitative method utilizes Natural Language Processing (NLP) and the Naive Bayes sentiment analysis technique, while qualitative content analysis enriches the findings. The results demonstrate that news coverage in mainstream media outlets (Jawa Post, Kompas, and CNN Indonesia) failed to fulfill the watchdog function, as reporting was predominantly positive toward the government and its supporters, and hostile toward NGOs and groups critical of the government. A similar trend is observed on Twitter. However, analysis of sousveillance practices reveals that, although sousveillance does not directly influence policy change, it contributes to intermedia agenda-setting and can function as an alternative form of oversight. These findings highlight the significance of sousveillance as a form of citizen oversight, particularly in contexts where democratic institutions are in decline.

Keywords: digital activism, digital democracy, sousveillance, watchdog

INTRODUCTION

Digital media have provided citizens with alternative means to monitor state power and corporate authority. Such forms of oversight are made possible by the participatory nature of internet-based new media. Ganascia (2010) argues that every individual can capture images and record the voices of others and subsequently disseminate them freely on the internet. Ganascia notes that the widespread dissemination of information through books, newspapers, radio, television, film, or photography constitutes a privilege of powerful institutions, such as the state or wealthy corporations. If the mass media era was characterized by top-down surveillance, the new conditions increasingly shaped by bottom-up monitoring, or *sousveillance*, even as top-down surveillance continues to persist. In this regard, Ganascia (2010) concludes, "sousveillance now plays a dominant role in modern societies, which influences the traditional political forms."

In Ganascia's perspective, sousveillance serves to correct abuses of power and conduct scrutiny of public goods. Mann (2017) employs this term to refer to individuals who utilize digital technologies such as mobile phones and wearable computing devices to monitor police and other authorities. In this context, sousveillance is considered to undermine traditional panopticon models (Barker & Jane, 2016), namely surveillance models implemented by authorities and corporations such as CCTV in supermarkets, highways, or shopping malls. Sousveillance, conversely, challenges such panopticons and gives rise to what Ganascia (2010) terms the *catopticon*.

In democracies experiencing continuous decline such as Indonesia (Abhipraya et al., 2020; Aspinall et al., 2020; Habibi, 2021), bottom-up alternative movements have become increasingly important when mainstream media can no longer be expected to serve as a pillar of democracy (the fourth estate) due to coverage biased toward owners and the vested interests of affiliated groups (Masduki et al., 2023; Souisa, 2020), even though such resistance is not always successful (Lim, 2017b; Saud & Margono, 2021; Suwana, 2020; Tapsell, 2019). In this context, the notion of alternative democracy (Dahlgren, 2014) offered by digital media becomes significant, although studies examining the contribution of digital media to democracy in Indonesia tend to yield ambivalent findings. Several studies demonstrate positive contributions, while others highlight negative consequences. Research supporting democratic optimism primarily proceeds from the argument that digital media have encouraged broader political participation in monitoring abuses of power (Saud & Margono, 2021; Suwana, 2020), resistance against oligarchic power (Tapsell, 2019), and promotion of grassroots participation and democratic public sphere (Saud & Margono, 2021; Sumartias et al., 2023). Conversely, several studies indicate a more pessimistic stance toward the contribution of digital media to democracy. Digital media are

instead perceived as challenges and even threats to democracy in Indonesia, such as disinformation on social media (Arif, 2016; Nurhayati & Suryadi, 2017; Rahmadhany et al., 2021; Utami, 2019; Utomo, 2022), hate speech and algorithmic bias (Lim, 2017b), social polarization (Muhtar et al., 2025), and the proliferation of buzzers or cybertroops who frequently attack individuals or groups critical of the government or authorities (Masduki, 2022).

This research argues that sousveillance can serve as an alternative form of bottom-up monitoring to address abuses of power. As Dahlgren (2014) articulates, citizen participation remains paramount in democracy, although dictatorial leaders will organize groups of cheering subjects to help maintain the illusion of legitimate support for authority. In the Indonesian context, this phenomenon has given rise to political buzzers (Lim, 2017a; Masduki, 2021). Consequently, sousveillance plays a crucial role in scrutinizing abuses of power and constitutes part of broader political participation. Sousveillance functions not only as a means to resist top-down surveillance but also as a form of political participation wherein citizens become empowered actors in political life (Dahlgren, 2014).

Through available technologies, particularly smartphones, individuals can share personal data and anonymous records (Ganascia, 2010) to monitor governments, corporations, or parties possessing greater power (Thomsen, 2019). Nevertheless, Dahlgren (2014) cautions that when we engage with social media, we leave digital traces that open opportunities for surveillance practices by corporations and political authorities that may threaten democracy. Thus, according to Dahlgren (2014), the internet cannot be viewed merely as technology but rather in terms of how the internet is organized, financed, controlled, and utilized. Therefore, the internet offers not only equality but also the accumulation of power. The continuously expanding social media networks reinforce the dominance of powerful groups and over time contribute to the accumulation of power (Lim, 2024).

From a political economy perspective, sousveillance must be situated within the context of resistance against power in asymmetric power relations. Citizens engaged in sousveillance activities are agents who consciously attempt to correct abuses of power. They are citizens who actively serve as watchdogs of power. Traditionally, this role has been performed by mass media (Kalogeropoulos et al., 2015; Okumura et al., 2021). The watchdog metaphor implies that journalists act as guardians against groups in society that possess power. Watchdogs must represent the people, remain vigilant against potential threats, and hold governing elites such as governments and public officials accountable (Kalogeropoulos et al., 2015). However, the effectiveness of sousveillance in correcting power depends on numerous factors. One such factor is its capacity to establish inter media

agenda-setting.

Camilo and Silva (2014) explain that the manner in which personal publications available online acquire the potential to create inter media agenda-setting in mainstream media. Through personal portals, blogs, or personal networks, individuals can produce and disseminate discourse to potentially global audiences, in a movement whose consequences are already observable in mainstream media coverage. Through inter media agenda-setting, mainstream media will promote the emergence of public agendas and subsequently transform them into political agendas (Camilo & Silva, 2014).

In February 2022, videos and photographs circulated depicting violence perpetrated by police officers against Wadas residents who were protesting the andesite stone mining for the Bener Dam construction project. A Kompas journalist reported that the incident occurred on February 8, 2022, when hundreds of police officers, wearing either official uniforms or civilian/plain attire, escorted employees of the National Land Agency (Badan Pertanahan Nasional/BPN) to conduct land measurements. The government intended to utilize andesite stone located in Wadas Village as material for the construction of Bener Dam, which constitutes part of the National Strategic Project (Proyek Strategis Nasional/PSN).

Project Multatuli (Setiawan, 2022), a nonprofit organization dedicated to advocating public journalism, reported that the violent incident commenced in the morning at approximately 08:00 when residents gathered at the village mosque. Approximately two hours later, according to Project Multatuli's report, 200 security personnel entered Wadas Village followed by 50 plainclothes police officers. Their objective was to escort 70 National Land Agency officials who would conduct land measurements for andesite mining purposes. When BPN employees and residents supportive of the mining proceeded with the measurements, law enforcement officers confined residents inside the mosque using shields, followed by arrests of residents accompanied by violence (Fakhry, 2022). Photographs and videos of the violence circulated rapidly, particularly those uploaded by the @Wadas_Melawan X (Twitter) account.

Ismail Fahmi, founder of the big data analytics platform Drone Emprit, asserts that the @Wadas_Melawan account has been instrumental in sustaining the issue (Rahayu & Rahmadi, 2022). This account has been involved in campaigns against andesite stone mining in Wadas Village since 2019. Wadas Village residents themselves possess a degree of media literacy. They have received training on the importance of media and how to utilize citizen journalism. Consequently, when violence occurred in Wadas Village, residents actively recorded acts of violence and countered the narrative through @Wadas_Melawan using various social media groups. This resistance by the Wadas community can be categorized as a form of sousveillance against abuses of power by the state authorities.

Digital activism in Indonesia has received considerable attention from researchers. Notable cases include the weakening of the Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi/KPK) (Saud & Margono, 2021; Suwana, 2020), environmental advocacy (Kurniawan & Rye, 2014), and advocacy for press freedom in the post-authoritarian era (Masduki & Wendratama, 2025). However, existing studies predominantly focus on digital activism as mobilization and participation rather than as a mechanism of political surveillance. Conversely, practices of sousveillance remain underexplored, particularly regarding how such practices interact with mainstream media systems and state power structures. To address this gap, this study examines sousveillance practices conducted by the Wadas community to monitor violence and abuses of power by the government, including law enforcement officers.

In contrast to traditional surveillance conducted by authorities, sousveillance involves citizens who utilize digital tools to monitor political processes and expose abuses of power. This focus enables this study to move beyond conventional analyses of digital activism and conceptualize citizen practices as forms of counter-surveillance and accountability mechanisms. This approach extends ongoing debates about digital activism in Indonesia and highlights the complex relationship between digital participation, media systems, and power in contemporary democratic governance.
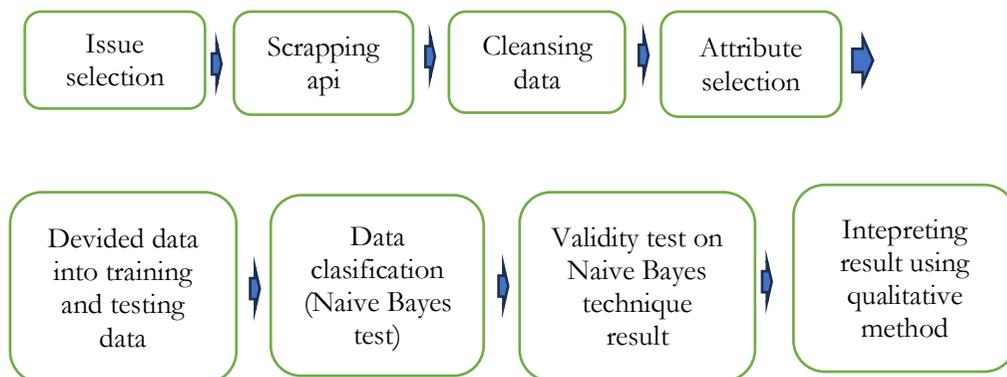
RESEARCH METHODS

This article compares public opinion and media coverage regarding a viral issue that occurred in 2022, namely the Wadas case. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study conducts data analysis in two stages. The first stage involves extracting data from online news and social media and analyzing them using Natural Language Processing (NLP), specifically through sentiment analysis employing the Naïve Bayes technique. Subsequently, the NLP results are applied to qualitative analysis to obtain more nuanced findings. Qualitative analysis is conducted to examine public digital activism aimed at challenging authorities' violence. This analysis primarily reviews posts on the @Wadas_Melawan account and how these posts attracted media attention. Viral photographs, particularly from the @Wadas_Melawan account, constitute concrete examples of sousveillance conducted by citizens, which serve as the subject of this research.

Data were extracted from the social media account (Twitter) @wadas_melawan with hashtags "KekerasanWadas", "Kekerasanaparat", "WadasMelawan", "KonflikAgraria", "GanjarPranowo dan "WargaWadas". Additional data were collected from news related to these topics published by CNN, Kompas, and Jawa Pos. All data were collected using API-based scraping techniques. The data collection period was February-April 2022 for the Wadas

case. The number of tweets on the Wadas issue totaled 21,708 as units of analysis, and the total news collected from CNN comprised 351 articles, Kompas 100, and Jawa Pos 87.

Two types of data processing were employed in this study, based on analytical needs. In brief, social media and website data were cleaned, categorized, and evaluated using Python-based lexicon models as well as machine learning models employing the Naïve Bayes technique. The analytical procedures are illustrated in Figure 1.

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Source: research stages processed by the researchers

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Media institutions play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and monitoring abuses of power. However, these functions often fail due to factors such as economic dependence on government advertising (Rianto et al., 2023) and significant owner intervention in editorial decisions (Masduki et al., 2023). To illustrate these patterns, this research analyzes trends in mainstream online media coverage of the Wadas case, specifically on kompas.com, cnn.com, and jawapos.com. This analysis is compared with Twitter (now X) trends to assess whether sousveillance can function as an alternative surveillance mechanism when mainstream media prove ineffective.

Mainstream media coverage trend: positive towards the government and its supporters

The results of data analysis for the three mainstream media examined in this research are presented in Table 1. To map media coverage patterns, three main actors analyzed in each news report include the government, political parties, and civil society groups such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and

religious institutions. The selection of these three actors is based on the assumption that they are involved in the narrative contestation regarding dam construction and violence in Wadas.

Table 1. Media Coverage References on the Wadas Issue

News	Positive	Negative	Note
CNN Indonesia			
Government			Negative, 94 articles, criticizing Ganjar's performance, violence in Wadas
	√	√	Positive, 193 articles, supporting Ganjar for opening dialogue with Wadas community, Ganjar's promise to investigate perpetrators of violence against Wadas community, compensation for Wadas community
Political parties (PKB. Demokrat, Golkar, PDIP, PKS)			Negative, 22 articles criticizing Ganjar's performance as governor and the violence in Wadas
	√	√	Positive, 14 articles PDIP, appreciating Ganjar for addressing Wadas issue, compensation for Wadas community
Other (NGO, Religion organizations, National figures)		√	Negative articles, 28 articles, condemning Wadas violence, questioning ecological sustainability, questioning mining permits
Jawa Pos			
Government			Negative, 3 articles (criticizing Ganjar for neglecting victims)
	√	√	Positive, 39 articles (appreciating Ganjar for opening dialogue, supporting various Ganjar's actions such as providing compensation to Wadas community, his apology, and his promise to investigate violence in Wadas)
Political parties			Negative, 3 articles in which PDIP criticized Ganjar's performance
	√	√	Positive: 3 articles supporting Ganjar's efforts to resolve the Wadas issue
Indonesia's famous figures		√	Criticizing Ganjar's performance
Other (NGOs, Religious organizations, House of Representatives)	√	√	Negative, 18 articles, criticizing government regarding violence in Wadas, government's stance contradicting Wadas location plan, disappointment toward government

			Positive, 20 articles, Ganjar's efforts to address Wadas issue, compensation to Wadas community
Kompas			
Government			Negative, 20 articles, expressing concern over violence in Wadas, questioning urgency of Wadas project and its sustainability for Indonesia's interests
	√	√	Positive, 35 articles, supporting Ganjar's actions to dialogue with community, Ganjar's visit to Wadas, Ganjar's promise to handle Wadas victims and Wadas compensation
Law enforcement officers	√		Positive, 2 articles on investigations into perpetrators of violence
Indonesia's famous figures			Negative, 6 articles, criticizing Ganjar's performance and expressing concern for Wadas victims
	√	√	Positive, 4 articles, appreciating Ganjar's actions in opening dialogue with Wadas community, collaboration to address Wadas issue
Other (NGO, Religious organizations, National figures)			Negative: 28 articles criticizing the Wadas project, violence, mining permits, and ecological sustainability
	√	√	Positive: 5 articles appreciating Ganjar's dialogue initiatives and compensation measures

Source: Researcher's data analysis

Table 1 presents the sentiment distribution of CNN Indonesia news across three subjects. While coverage of the government and political parties encompasses both positive and negative sentiments, positive news about the government is more prevalent. Conversely, coverage of other subjects, such as NGOs, is generally negative. This pattern indicates that CNN Indonesia's reporting on the Wadas case is highly supportive of the government, with critical groups often portrayed negatively.

Jawa Pos and Kompas exhibit similar patterns. Coverage of the government is predominantly positive, with negative reporting occurring more infrequently. As a central figure in Central Java due to his position as governor, Ganjar Pranowo received more extensive coverage related to Wadas violence and Bener Dam construction. Coverage related to Ganjar Pranowo can be either positive or negative, depending on the context. Nevertheless, the coverage demonstrates mainstream media bias supporting the government, particularly concerning the Central Java Governor, Ganjar Pranowo.

Reporting on political parties, for instance, is generally balanced; however, parties supporting Ganjar Pranowo (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, PDIP) frequently receive favorable coverage. Public figures who criticize Ganjar Pranowo are portrayed negatively, while other organizations receive both positive and negative attention. Organizations aligned with Ganjar Pranowo are also depicted positively. In Kompas, actors associated with law enforcement are covered positively, whereas criticism of Ganjar Pranowo is typically reported negatively. Individuals who praise Ganjar's response to violence in Wadas are likewise presented positively. These patterns indicate that mainstream online media do not fulfill their surveillance function over the government. Despite the circulation of videos documenting violence in Wadas on social media, the three online news outlets generally report positively about Ganjar Pranowo as a central figure due to his position as governor.

Table 2. Media Bias in Coverage of the Wadas Issue: CNN Indonesia, Jawa Pos, Kompas

Online Media	Finding
CNN Indonesia	1. No news regarding investigation of violence in Wadas
	2. News reporting focuses on Ganjar Pranowo's performance
	3. No reporting on the details of the compensation process
	4. There is imbalance between news and perspectives
	5. Narratives largely corner Wadas community and position Ganjar as a heroic figure
Jawa Pos	1. News coverage centers on Ganjar Pranowo's performance as governor
	2. There is imbalance between news and perspectives
	3. Negative reporting on the Wadas issue focuses on victims' conditions following the violence
	4. No coverage informing the public about investigation of Wadas violence
	5. No reporting on the details of the compensation process
Kompas	1. Coverage is relatively balanced
	2. No coverage regarding investigations or legal proceedings related Wadas violence
	3. No detailed coverage of dialogue between Ganjar Pranowo and the Wadas community
	4. No news explaining details about compensation process
	5. Appreciation of Ganjar Pranowo's performance as governor

Source: Researcher's data analysis

Table 2 demonstrates that news coverage is generally more favorable to the government than to the community, with reporting trends in CNN Indonesia, Jawa Pos, and Kompas exhibiting considerable similarities. Table 2 highlights several important observations. First, none of the three mainstream media outlets produced investigative reports on violence in Wadas or provided details regarding compensation for affected residents, which aligns with the tendency of online news to prioritize speed over depth. Second, all three media frequently emphasize Governor Ganjar Pranowo, often portraying him positively or as a heroic figure. Although coverage is largely balanced, only Jawa Pos appears to address the experiences of victims of violence in Wadas.

Shifts in Public Opinion on Twitter (X) Toward Government Support

This study also examines trends on Twitter (X), which functions as an alternative to mainstream media through citizen journalism. This analysis assesses whether discussions on Twitter align with mainstream media coverage, thereby helping to map intermedia agendas.

A total of 24,952 opinions were extracted from Twitter (X) users between May and July 2022 concerning the Wadas issue, representing 53% of the raw data. To ensure data quality, the dataset was cleaned by removing redundant entries and identifying tweets generated by bots. The final cleaned dataset consisted of 21,708 tweets (47%), indicating that 3,154 tweets (6%) were identified as redundant or bot generated.

The repeated narratives referred to include: *"Alhamdulillah yeess warga Wadas dapat ganti untung sehat selalu pak", "mantap Pak Ganjar di Wadas","Weekend Wadas Ganjar", "Haloow Wadas Ganjar" ("Praise be to God, yes, the residents of Wadas have received compensation. Wishing you continuous health, Sir," "Excellent, Mr. Ganjar, in Wadas," "Weekend Wadas Ganjar," "Hello Wadas Ganjar").* Various opinions and hashtag compositions used in this issue are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. User opinions on the Wadas issue

Tweet Compositions		
Others	10490	17%
Violence Against Residents	237	33%
Wadas Resists	3795	1%
Thank You, Mr. Ganjar	7276	48%

Source: Researcher's data analysis

Many opinions and hashtags related to the Wadas case discuss related topics, such as environmental and ecological issues, comments on political parties, and statements from prominent Indonesian figures. The data reveal polarization based on attitudes toward the government: positive labels indicate support,

whereas negative labels indicate opposition. A summary of results for the Wadas issue is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Data Conclusion

Opinion	Positive	Negative	Note
Others	√	√	Environmental issues (negative, 3,147 tweets)
			Ecological issues (negative, 26,622 tweets)
			Opinions from political parties and Indonesian famous figures (positive, 1,281 tweets; negative, 3,439 tweets)
Thank You, Mr. Ganjar	√	√	Positive, 5,129 tweets
			Negative, 2,147 tweets
Violence against residents		√	Negative, 237 tweets
Wadas resists	√	√	Positive, 898 tweets
			Negative, 2,897 tweets

Source: researcher's data analysis

Data analysis related to the Wadas case yields several findings. The final tweet concerning this subject appeared on July 20, 2022, expressing support for the government, specifically Governor Ganjar Pranowo, and opposition to the Wadas community. No series of tweets providing detailed chronology of violence against Wadas residents, nor did any tweets discuss the victims. The polarization of tweets shifted between June 22 and July 20, 2022: before June 22, most tweets criticized the government, whereas after that date, the majority expressed support. Additionally, no tweets addressed law enforcement officers who violated regulations or perpetrated violence against Wadas residents.

Sousveillance and Intermedia Agenda Setting in Wadas
Sousveillance can function as an alternative mechanism of control over abuses of power (Ganascia, 2010; Spier, 2017) when mainstream media fail to fulfill this role. However, in the Wadas case, this form of bottom-up monitoring did not produce immediate outcomes. Although sousveillance practices undertaken by the Wadas community were able to generate intermedia agenda-setting, the power structures they confronted were highly entrenched.

This study demonstrates that, in the initial stage, videos and images of violence in Wadas uploaded by residents were able to promote the occurrence of

inter media agenda-setting, wherein content that initially circulated on social media was amplified by mainstream media. Citizen uploads, including from the @Wadas_Melawan account highlighting abuses of power by law enforcement officers that went viral on social media, prompted mainstream media to respond (see Figure 2). Violence in Wadas Village, along with photographs documenting the violence and the encirclement of the village mosque, was broadcast by mainstream media such as cnnindonesia.com, bbc.com/indonesia, detik.com, republika.com, and even featured on NU online (nu.or.id). However, this coverage aimed more to maintain relevance with online public interest rather than to deliver in-depth reporting. In other words, mainstream media covered violence in Wadas not to fulfill their role as watchdogs but rather to serve market interests. In this context, violence and its sensationalism were deliberately exploited, while the pursuit of truth grounded in journalism's core principles was disregarded (see Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2021).

Source: Live shooting results of the @Wadas_Melawan account

Picture 2: Iconic image of police violence in Wadas Village

In the case of police violence in Wadas, mainstream media coverage may be interpreted as signaling the public importance of the issue, such that it could not be ignored by either local or central governments. However, the success of sousveillance in generating intermedia agenda-setting does not automatically translate into success in driving policy change. Acts of violence by law enforcement officers against residents continued even after the issue was covered by mainstream media, and this exposure did not alter central government policy regarding mining activities in Wadas. In other words, sousveillance proved

effective only at a surface level and has not resulted in substantive policy change.

The virality of this case only captured public attention momentarily, rather than resulting in the cancellation of the mining project. This outcome contrasts with other viral cases, such as #SaveKPK or the Prita Mulyasari case against Omni Hospital (Molaei, 2015; Suwana, 2020). In both cases, digital activism changed the direction of government policy or halted legal proceedings. By contrast, the viral issue of violence in Wadas merely became commodities for mainstream media. In this regard, Purwati and Widaningsih (2025) explain that while the development of digital technology can open new opportunities for individuals or groups to voice their ideas without relying on conventional media, it simultaneously transforms the online media climate into click-based, advertising-based, and engagement-based media. In the case of police violence in Wadas, this dynamic is evidenced by research results showing positive coverage trends for the government, while coverage trends for other subjects (such as NGOs) tend to be negative. This pattern indicates that CNN Indonesia's coverage of the Wadas case strongly supports the government. Furthermore, groups critical of the government tend to be reported negatively. A similar tendency is observed in Jawa Pos and Kompas coverage. Both media also predominantly published positive coverage for the government. The scarcity of investigative coverage in mainstream media reinforces the argument that mainstream media have failed to fulfill their role as watchdogs.

Trends on Twitter (X) do not differ substantially from those observed in mainstream media. Although several issues were raised on Twitter (X) as shown in Table 3, the overall pattern closely mirrors that of mainstream media, this trend particularly occurred after June 2022. Before June 2022, trends on Twitter (X) remained critical of the government, but afterward the trend shifted in the opposite direction. Tweets tended to provide positive emphasis on the government, especially Governor Ganjar Pranowo. Conversely, tweets regarding violence and legal processes were notably absent. This tendency seemingly cannot be separated from government efforts to "silence" the people's voice. As noted by Muhajir (2022), the government not only conducted repression through internet shutdowns to suppress the spread of information about violence in Wadas but also carried out digital attacks against citizens. Muhajir stated,

> "The attacks were massive. They occurred on almost all social media platforms: Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp. The attacks were also consistent, with continuous attempts to access organizational and individual accounts. The police also questioned residents about who administered the Wadas Melawan accounts."

Repression of critical citizens has become a means for repressive-authoritarian governments in many countries. In Indonesia, this trend has also occurred in numerous political events. Masduki's (2022) study of the 2014 and 2019 general elections demonstrates that digital attackers have intervened in the autonomy of professional media workers to serve the public. This trend represents a shift from earlier forms of intervention patterns generally carried out by the state (Adiprasetio, 2025) and capital interests (Rianto et al., 2014; Souisa, 2020). Digital attacks have also extended into the academic sphere, particularly targeting academics involved in anti-corruption movements (Wijayanto et al., 2022).

The success or failure of citizen surveillance is fundamentally determined by political power structures. In the Wadas case, the political structure and interests rendered the citizen surveillance campaign in that community ineffective in influencing policy or holding those responsible for violence accountable. The situation contrasts sharply with the Prita Mulyasari case or other cases where digital activism and citizen sousveillance succeeded. Conversely, in the case of violence against Wadas residents, such success did not materialize, despite calls from various parties urging the government to conduct further investigation. One such party was the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM), which published an executive summary of Monitoring and Investigation of Excessive Use of Force in the Land Measurement Process in Wadas Village on February 8, 2022 (Komnas HAM Republik Indonesia, 2022). The executive summary states that, based on witness testimonies and obtained videos, acts of violence were found during arrests by plainclothes police officers on February 8, 2022, against Wadas residents who rejected the quarry. These actions resulted in several residents sustaining injuries to their foreheads, knees, and calves, and experiencing pain in other body parts, although no victims were hospitalized. Additionally, 67 residents were arrested and taken to Purworejo Police Station on February 8, 2022. They were only released on February 9, 2022.

The findings of this study indicate that sousveillance practices and digital activism by the Wadas community have not yet been able to change policy. This failure is inseparable from the strength of the power structure faced by the residents. Andesite mining in Wadas constitutes part of the Bener Dam construction, which has been designated as a National Strategic Project (Proyek Strategis Nasional/PSN). This status places residents in a position of direct confrontation with the state which owns the project. Public surveillance through sousveillance is highly challenging, even at the local level, due to the existence of various layers of state authority. The PSN designation provides the state with substantial political and legal grounds to proceed with the project.

PSN represents a priority development agenda implemented by President Joko Widodo's administration. This program is designed with a grand narrative of serving public interests and promoting economic growth. Wardana and

Darmawardana (2024) explain that with such claims, PSN presents significant social consequences, particularly in the form of exclusionary practices toward certain groups in society. PSN projects frequently open new spaces for capital circulation, both through large-scale infrastructure development and the opening of economic zones benefiting capital owners. Furthermore, Wardana and Darmawardana (2024) highlight that as a concept, PSN is not merely a development intervention involving the designation of strategic economic zones, infrastructure project construction, or technical capacity building for communities. This project also constitutes a discourse of power that is continuously constructed, contested, and reproduced by the state to regulate how society should conduct their lives.

In Wadas Village, residents faced a formidable opponent in the form of the state, which rendered their efforts to conduct surveillance or influence policy unsuccessful. Conversely, in the Prita Mulyasari case or Save KPK, the parties involved possessed less power, making public pressure more effective. In both cases, swift action against perpetrators of violence can mitigate negative social reactions, including public shame (Forestal, 2024). Tarnopolsky (Forestal, 2024) observes that democratic societies have historically employed public shame to enforce shared values and prevent deviant behavior.

The findings of this study complement Lim's (2017b) conclusions when analyzing Indonesian digital activism. Lim argues that a social media movement is more likely to succeed when the social movement is conveyed with a simple narrative, carries low risk, and does not challenge the dominant metanarrative. Conversely, a social movement will tend to encounter failure if the movement opposes the popular narrative propagated by mainstream media.

Analysis of Twitter (X) also supports an alternative perspective suggesting that the promise of digital public space has been impeded by authoritarian challenges, with social media shifting from protest machines to potential mechanisms for authoritarianism (Lim, 2024). Lim introduces the concept of algorithmic politics, which encompasses various political maneuvers that exploit existing algorithmic biases to influence the public. In Southeast Asia, as Lim demonstrates, political actors have exploited algorithms to influence citizens' decisions during elections as well as in everyday political affairs. In this context, Lim (2024) concludes that the use of algorithmic politics by political actors plays a significant role in weakening democracy and contributing to autocratization trends in the region.

This study concludes that inter media agenda-setting exists between mainstream media and sousveillance practices on social media. In many aspects, there is a relationship between developments on social media and coverage in mainstream media. Mainstream media do not wish to lag behind what transpires

on social media, thus they reproduce viral events from social media. Consequently, when events go viral on social media, mainstream media compete to broadcast them, giving rise to what this study terms "intermedia agenda-setting." On the other hand, this research also finds that sousveillance fails to change government policy due to the magnitude of power faced by the community. In this regard, it is not easy to resist a state that possesses a tradition of violence against its citizens. Ultimately, this research's conclusions reinforce numerous arguments regarding the positive aspects of digital democracy in Indonesia and how it can enhance citizen participation and control (Saud & Margono, 2021; Suwana, 2020), although it remains vulnerable to negative aspects due to the inherent characteristics of social media itself (Dahlgren, 2014; Lim, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion presented above, this study examines whether sousveillance is capable of functioning as an alternative form of surveillance when mainstream media fail to perform their watchdog role. The findings indicate that although citizen-led sousveillance and digital activism in the Wadas case did not produce direct policy change, both played crucial roles in shaping inter media agenda-setting and expanding public surveillance. However, the effectiveness of sousveillance depends on political power relations, particularly the dominance of state actors that constrains institutional change.

This study reveals a paradox of digital activism under authoritarian pressure: although sousveillance in the Wadas case generated significant media attention and public surveillance, it failed to produce institutional change. Rather than demonstrating failure, this paradox highlights the need to reconceptualize sousveillance beyond direct policy outcomes. Thus, this study contributes theoretically by framing sousveillance as a democratic resource that operates through agenda formation and narrative contestation. It also extends theories of participatory surveillance by situating citizen monitoring within the context of democratic backsliding in Indonesia and the structural constraints confronting Indonesian democracy.

Methodologically, this study adopts a multi-platform approach that combines media analysis, Twitter (X) discourse analysis, and grassroots surveillance practices. This approach enables a more comprehensive understanding of how surveillance interacts with institutional media and political authority. Practically, although no policy change occurred in the Wadas case, the findings highlight the central role of social media in promoting participation and transparency, which must continue to advance when confronting unjust political systems.

This study is limited by its focus on a single case. Comparative research employing a multi-case design is highly recommended. Multi-case studies

examining various forms of digital activism and surveillance can provide more accurate understanding of the factors influencing their outcomes. Thus, the prospects of citizen surveillance as a means of addressing the failure of mainstream media to monitor power in the future can be well concluded.

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