DISMALAND OR DISNEYLAND? CULTURE JAMMING AS A RESISTANCE PRACTICE

Rino Andreas

Universitas Gadjah Mada E - m a i I : rinoandreas@mail.ugm.ac.id

Abstract

The media offer a more varied form of resistance against the power of capitalism. The dominated class continues to be the antithesis of the "status quo", as is the hegemony that will not function entirely. One form of resistance is carried out through culture jamming (CJ). CJ can be observed in the advertisement of Dismaland which is a challenger against the Disneyland theme park which has been shaping the lifestyle and culture of modern society. This paper tried to elaborate on the form of culture jamming in the Dismaland video and explain the extent to which this form of resistance affects socio-cultural practices against Disneyland. It used a qualitative descriptive approach by using the discourses on culture jamming and critical theory as analysis. The results show that Dismaland as a form of culture jamming was successful in redefining playgrounds for children that were deemed "ideal" such as Disneyland. Through the audio-visual component, Dismaland presents satire and builds satirical discourse on the imagination of the people who are persistently trapped in the unending ideology of consumerism. The "interference" is shown by arranging, remediating, and representing Disney's characters and brand images using language that has been embedded in the minds of the public through the various existing artistic resources. Dismaland also demonstrates the irony of a hegemonic playground. Many visitors of Dismaland are part of the culture 107ammingg practice as consumer activism. Therefore, the Dismaland theme park becomes a place where boring and scary things are made to rethink reflectively the cultural implications of the consumptive dream theme park of Disneyland. Jamming culture analysis needs to be considered through political and economic aspects to be used effectively as a suggestion to convey a more provocative message through diverse media that culture must be tied to a bigger objective. In practice, Jammers can raise broader issues.

Keywords: Culture Jamming; Dismaland; Resistance; Capitalism

Introduction Background

Culture is understood as an ideological arena. As long as there is a dominant culture, then, opposition cultures emerge that trigger changes. Discussing media based on a cultural perspective is understanding the ways of cultural production in ideological contest. As a cross-disciplinary study and based on ideological perspectives, media and cultural studies critically examine alternative cultural processes of the media in dealing with dominant cultural. It is as explained by Gramsci that knowledge and popular culture have become a vital arena of the ideology of power (Arifiannto, 2015).

Along with the development of advanced industry, capitalism keeps improving and adapting to the social culture of society. Frankfurt School intellectual figures, Horkheimer and Adorno in Dialectic of Enlightenment (2002) developed the concept of the cultural industry when entertainment and mass media became an industry in the capitalist era of post-World War II, both in circulating cultural commodities and manipulating human consciousness. The cultural industry deliberately creates false awareness of the world around the society by consuming false pleasures. Capitalism works in such a way that consumers are willing to consume the products of the cultural industry and finally lost in isolation. Further, it is increasingly difficult for society to get out of the capitalism flow, including through advertisements that create 'false needs' in consumers (Heidy, 2013).

Stuart Ewen (1976: 5) states that advertising creates a consumption ideology by promoting desires to the consumer. It is considered as a way to create a 'consumer culture' in which consumer will think that they have solved the problem by simply purchasing the offered product. One of the products of advanced capitalism is Disneyland that has shaped the lifestyle and culture of modern society over the years. Then, the mass media have a vital role to communicate it to society.

Then, the media approach and cultural studies reflectively and critically view Disneyland a phenomenon that was initially assumed merely as entertainment for children, by bringing up an analytical perspective beyond that assumption. Disneyland and its cartoon characters have become a cultural apparatus and bring ideology into a wider community. Further, based on the perspective of the cultural industry theory, society is currently in the middle of an ideological arena that comes through the commodification of culture. However, as a dialectical contradiction to the domination and hegemony of capitalism, its resistances have emerged. As widely known, hegemony never works totally. The dominated class will continue to be the anti-thesis of the "status quo". One of the resistance is through culture jamming. Culture Jamming is a response to dominant culture through parody and language rhetoric that has been widely known by the wider community. This "unique" form of resistance can be seen through a theme park, Dismaland.





Figure 25. Disneyland's logo dan Dismaland's logo

Dismaland is a temporary art project organized by Banksy, a street artist. It was built in the seaside resort town of Weston-Super-Mare in England. This project was secretly prepared. It opened on 21 August 2015 and permanently closed on 27 September 2015 or 36 days later. This exhibition became popular then many visitors queued for hours every day to get the entrance ticket. The project managed to attract 150,000 visitors from around the world, boosting Weston-super-Mare's local economy by £ 20 million. Then, in May 2016, Dismaland was announced achieving the South Bank Sky Arts Award.

Banksy created ten new works and funded the construction. The event featured 58 artists and managed to sell 4,000 tickets per day for £ 3 of each.

As a form of culture jamming, Dismaland is interpreted as a "gloomy" work aimed at criticizing Disneyland. Culture Jamming can be observed in various media, such as in Adbusters (a culture jamming group that criticizes advertisements). For example, to question Nike's image and invite the public to consider more factors behind this famous shoe brand including the commercial climate and exploitation production, especially the exploitation of workers around the world. However, Adbusters' criticism of dominant ideology and culture can potentially be faded as the criticism is ignored or marginalized by the mainstream media (Arviani, 2011).

Moreover, the practice of culture jamming can also be seen in 1989, a group known as Barbie Liberation Organization (BLO) which replaced the voice chip of G.I. Joe with the Barbie doll. It was done as resistance to gender stereotypes ideas through children's toys. Then, it causes both voice chips were deliberately exchanged. As a result, the toy was returned to the shop in which a Barbie doll with a masculine voice and a G.I. Joe with a feminine voice. It creates hopes for a protest against gender inequality (Harold, 2004). Another example is shown by resistance to Victoria's Secret. By social media, FORCE managed to "hijack" Victoria's Secret by covering them as part of the brand through the Pink Loves Consent campaign. It is disguised as consensus creating entry points into conversations with Victoria's Secret followers which triggers an online dialogue about creating awareness of sex and body health (Madden, 2018).

Indeed, there are many cultures jamming that can be observed as a form of resistance to power and oppression. The 2011 Cop Spraying Pepper and Meme Tankman, based on Weibo created parodies of iconic historical events. Further, culture jamming was also in the form of a flash mob with an entertaining nuance. Meanwhile, in Spain in 2015, culture jamming was practiced through holographic media of hologram demonstrations in the context of prohibiting demonstrations held in front of government buildings without the authorities' permission. It results in the term "gag law". Thus, the protest was carried out through a hologram in which there is no physical presence and replaced by a hologram at night. It is considered a form of mocking regarding the presence of a political body (López, 2016). Even though there were many polices on guard, none of them were arrested as they did not violate the rules. It can be said that the media used in culture jamming have various techniques. In this case, communication is the entry point for culture jamming as a strategy not only for branding and commercialization but also subversion through the role of media.

Based on the elaboration above, this paper aims to elaborate the question "What is the form of culture jamming in the Dismaland video?" and "To what extent does this form of resistance affect socio-cultural practices against Disneyland?" The next section explains the concept of culture jamming and then followed with a discussion.

Culture Jamming Phenomenon

The term culture jamming, or CJ comes from the slang word "jamming" intended to interfere with the transmission of the message. The interference can be in the form of sabotage, trickery, prank, or banditry on the monolithic power structure that governs socio-cultural life. Culture Jamming also has some terms of "semiological guerrilla warfare" as proposed by Umberto Eco (1986: 135), while Stuart Ewen calls it political "visual literacy". Jammer culture is understood as an attempt to find an alternative understanding of the resistance movement (Dery, 1993). Culture jamming is usually

described as non- "overblown" resistance to the system. It is the rhetoric of contradictory messages to bring about a qualitative change. In this context, culture jamming is not simply seen as destroying or stopping corporate media. Rather, it is more useful to consider as artistic messages, a rhetorical process that challenges the corporate to bring out new meanings with an added sense of humor or jokes. Generally, jammers modify media as a practice of cultural resistance to advanced capitalism (Dery, 2017: 29).

Culture jamming, sometimes known as guerrilla communication, a form of rhetorical protest as an anti-consumerism movement utilizing marketing tools and mass media to subvert hegemonic messages which are often mediated (Harold, 2004). Moreover, Klein (1999: 280) defines culture jamming as the practice of parodying advertisements and billboard piracy to drastically change messages. Historically, culture jamming emerged and developed in the 1950s and 1960s as a movement against anticonsumerism. In America, this movement is associated with the emergence of hippies, punks, critical students, and street art that are worried about the spread of consumer culture. The jammer commits to warp established politics through commercial rhetoric to subvert and reclaim their freedoms. This concept was initiated by Guy Debord (201), the author of the book Society of the Spectacle, who saw daily life flooded with visual spectacles. The domination model of capitalism creates a promise of entertainment and consumer culture resulting in the strategy of "detournement", as an attempt to "devalue the spectacle" (Lasn, 1999: 108). Detournement can be translated as "detour" or "diversion" or "derailment" in a more subtle sense, while in France it is referred to as "piracy," "embezzlement," "corruption" and "diversion" (Sadler, 1999).

The presence of the Situationists has been interpreted as an attempt to update Marxist theory to the specific conditions of consumer society (Best and Kellner, 1997). And in turn, it broadens the concept of consumer culture analysis. The implications of advanced capitalism have hegemony the working class who raises the standard of living but loses critical awareness in which the needs and demands are shaped by the consumer culture. This détournement strategy allows cultural resistance to the spectacle.

Culture Jamming as a Social Practice

Culture Jamming is an alternative that can be used by active consumer in interpreting consumer culture. Debord in Dery (2017) explains that advertising is not merely a means of parody or entertainment. Debord and the postmodern Situationist group oppose parody as an effective rhetorical strategy as it maintains and reinforces the brand image, rather than disturbing the audience in building awareness. Therefore, it requires forms of advertising communication with an extreme work of art that 'destroys' or 'deflects' the message of the advertisement as a parody that mocks or satirizes certain advertisements which are considered to have political, social, or environmental issues. Then, this movement is called the Culture Jamming practice.

At the same time, the advertising industry continues to reproduce and create standardization through increased control over consumer desires. Community is not controlled through confinement, physical repression, and silencing of individuals but "continuous" control and communication (Harold, 2004). It means that people are not prohibited from accessing information and knowledge, but they are given greater freedom of access through open technology and institutional hybridization. However, freedom emerges as a new and irrational freedom. Consumers lose their critical power due using advertising to create voluntary compliance (Carducci, 2006).

Besides, Fowles explains the emergence of criticism of popular culture and the advertisement. Fowles cites the critique that emerged in Horkheimer and Adorno considering that all mass culture is identical and superficial resulting in the uniformity of societies' minds where this culture industry is considered to rob individuality of one's thinking (Putri, 2011). Culture jamming is good at interrupting a spectacular culture by turning against it as one of its most effective tools and Christine Harold calls it "rhetorical sabotage" (Farrar, 2008). In practice, the culture jamming accommodates groups and individuals who protest symbolically against the expansion and domination of companies and the logic of the market in public and private settings. The 'symbolic protest' refers to the targeting of central symbols such as advertising objects, logos, or other symbols essential to framing the dominant discourse of company policy. The reintroduced symbol in alternative contexts is reversed or destroyed through critics of mainstream discourse and declares independence and autonomy simultaneously (Wettergren, 2009).

Therefore, it can be said that culture jamming is a tactic that uses the language of capitalism to attack the capitalist regime itself. Culture Jamming is very different in formulating a revolutionary political movement as it is not based on the ideology of the active mass that vulgarly fight but uses the consumer language in the communication context of consumer culture. In other words, culture jamming has the aim not to undermine capitalism but to cause disruption.

Methodology

Based on the description in the previous section, this paper deeper examines the practice of culture jamming at Dismaland. It used a descriptive qualitative approach which describes conditions, situations, or social reality phenomena as the object of research, namely culture jamming as a theory of analysis. It used a combination of critical theory and visual analysis. It used primary and secondary data collected through documentation. Primary data are in the form of Dismaland videos and secondary data are from books, journals and website.

This study uses documentation and observation data collection techniques which are a way of collecting data by observing the culture jamming phenomenon in advertising media through text, images, and audio by taking screenshots. This study uses a purposive sampling technique which is based on the focus of the study with the intention of capturing information, depending on the research objectives. The data analysis technique used in this research is qualitative analysis used by researchers, including data collection, data reduction, data presentation and conclusions.

The next section discusses the culture jamming in Dismaland as a form of resistance to the established power system.

Results and Discussion

The result of this study shows that Dismaland as a form of culture jamming was redefining playgrounds for children that were deemed "ideal" such as Disneyland. Through the audio-visual component, Dismaland presents satire and builds satirical discourse. The "interference" is shown by arranging, remediating, and representing Disney's characters and brand images using language that has been embedded in the minds of the public through the various existing artistic resources. Dismaland also demonstrates the irony of a hegemonic playground.

Dismaland: Hijacking through the audio-visual.

As the initiator of Dismland, Banksy described Dismaland as "a family theme park which is not suitable for children". This idea was inspired by the "Disneyland" painting series by American artist, Jeff Gillette, who also participated in the exhibition. Culture jamming is understood as a practical instrument resulting in a real movement in an advanced capitalist society. Dismaland can be found in art exhibitions in the UK as part of a public space without intervention. The video presented on Youtube begins with a picture of a nuclear family consisting of a father, mother, and children. As a white middle class, they seem to gather at the dining table but are bored with their daily activities. The woman (read: mother) is pouring milk (domestic work) for her children, while the father is reading the newspaper.



Figure 26. The scene of a nuclear family at home

The narrator communicates to the family and the audience saying, "Is there something missing in your life?" And offers a place that can get rid of boredom. In turn, the family rushed together to the happiest place on earth, a theme park that is different from the others, called Dismaland.

Shortly, at the entrance to Dismaland, they underwent a security check procedure. Uniquely, the guards look unfriendly and expressionless (object), like a robot. Likewise, security facilities look fake made from cardboard shaped to resemble detector doors, CCTV, computers, tables, chairs, pistols, and the communication media used. They are showed explicitly and intentionally. It is funny that the staff then carried out a very strict search of the bags of children who were thought to carry weapons or grenades to the theme park.



Figure 27. Guards at the entrance to Dismaland

It indicates a form of satire on the security issue at Disneyland, as a safe park for children, by being treated with great suspicion. It is the same case with the strict conditions in prison. The depiction was aimed at Disneyland which has regulations and various baggage restrictions, as part of its compliance and control system. Visitors

inevitably have to comply with it to enter Disneyland. After the security check, they proceeded to the rides and displays. Many "strange" rides can be observed.



Figure 28. Fictional characters at Dismaland

Figure 28 shows a Dismaland video presenting a mermaid who has a green paddle and purple shells with a distortion effect with an abandoned, mossy, and damaged palace as the background. Based on a culture jamming perspective, it seems familiar to one of the famous Disney characters, Ariel. Ariel is the main character of the 28th Disney animated film entitled The Little Mermaid (1989). She has also appeared in the sequels of the videos of The Little Mermaid II: Return to the Sea and The Little Mermaid: Ariel's Beginning. Further, she also has appeared in TV series. As the fourth princess character, Ariel is known as a woman (mermaid) with white skin, and red hair with bangs. Her large eyes color is sea-blue green. Her body is quite small and slim with red lips. However, the depiction of the characters between Dismaland and Disneyland is very different with a distorting effect that is disturbing to the viewer. Typically, the character depiction of a beautiful princess is to have white skin and slim. The comparison can be seen clearly due to the awareness that has been developed previously even though it was reconstructed with some changes.

This family looks surprised and confused by the Dismaland rides which provide fun and enjoyment. It also shows a miniature display of Burger King and there are fire and damage at the toll road. This "chaotic" condition is added with polices who block the road with their car. Further, there is "vandalism" on the city walls. It can be understood as a medium that deals with aspects beyond the public space reclaim through graffiti to communicate messages symbolically, politically, and artistically to the audience. It also presents upside-down baby artwork, scary magic bunnies, rats, and Cookie Monster character in the Sesame Street TV series who joins the battle with a rifle. The funny characters on the Disneyland display are then copied and re-represented by changing some elements to provide different meanings such as transforming funny, cute, and fun into creepy and scary things for children for example inverted Cinderella horse carriage and swirling skull as a sign of death and irony.

Furthermore, Dismaland also showed how the theme park burns books. As widely known, theme parks do not educate children at all but become a part of advanced capitalism. Disneyland, which is a hyper-real image according to Baudrillard (1994), positions theme parks as a solution to human alienation in a fun way. Herbert Marcuse (2013) calls this phenomenon "repressive desublimation" It is a condition in which the community is satisfied with what they feel, even though it is intellectually and culturally oppressive, but works subtly and pleasantly.



Figure 29. Rides at Dismaland

The narrator also promises a world that can fulfill all the dreams of the visitors by narrating "Dismaland, a place with all your dreams come true". However, the visualization is deliberately made as something inconclusive and deceptive. In the deeper observation showed that the narrator conveys a quite similar utterance as Disney land's existing tagline "The happiest place on Earth" and the famous slogan of "Where Dreams Come True". As widely known, Disneyland has changed its slogan several times as a promotional campaign strategy. Over the past few years, Disneyland has used Disneypark's slogan, "Where Dreams Come True," interchangeably with "The happiest place on Earth." During the 2009 campaign, with free admission on birthdays, it used "What Will You Celebrate?". In 2005 for its 50th Anniversary Celebration, Disneyland called it" The Happiest Homecoming on Earth". Disneyland's advertising slogan in the late 50s or early 60s had a "More Funable!" slogan. Parody of brand names and marketing slogans is one of the effective tools in organizing contemporary forms of consumer "boycott"(Friedman, 1999: 221). Cultural jamming provides a channel for sharing feelings in a consumer society, an environment where brand knowledge is a form of cultural capital and facilities that are part of the habitus (Bourdieu, 1984). Finally, the family goes home at night with the children sleep soundly in the car and the father falls asleep while driving. The scene ends with a screaming background sound and crumbled and destroyed the Dismaland logo. The two-minute video is a part of the resistance practice. Culture jamming of Dismaland raises the idea for consumers to think back reflectively about the continuously reproduced consumption culture through a pleasant advertising image that promises enjoyment.

The high demand for tickets to the exhibition caused the Dismaland website to repeatedly crash or down. It can also be interpreted as a part of the irony of Dismaland's unpleasant experience. Many celebrities were interested in trying the Dismaland experience such as Brad Pitt, Jack Black, Neil Patrick Harris, Nicholas Hoult, Wayne Coyne, Russell Brand, Ant & Dec, Mark Ronson, Darren Criss, Daddy G, CGP Gray, and Brady Haran (Ziyena, 2021). The exhibition received various reviews from critics as a creative sarcasm. It shows the community's consciousness that has been hegemonized by the dominant power. It can also be understood that visitors of the Dismaland are part of culture jamming as consumer activism. Considering the nature of the culture jamming which "hijacks" the language of capitalism to destabilize capitalism itself, it a tactic and co-optation to Disneyland.

Disneyland World Dystopia

In contrast to the utopia of children's theme parks in which an imaginary society is created with highly coveted or nearly perfect qualities. Dismaland positions itself as a

creepy and frightening theme park. But, it clearly shows how the utopia imagination offered by Disneyland never materialized which is built on egalitarian principles of equality and justice. The dystopia in the Dismaland video is constructed by incorporating media to lead visitors to unpleasant and "bad" places, even it looks gloomy, shabby, and abandoned. Besides, Dismaland shows the characteristics of Bansky's work related to the tremendous deterioration of the "ideal" value in society. Disney's dystopian representation has relevant political meaning to understand culture jamming from the perspective of cultural and media studies. The movement of disruption and subversion of consumption culture through Dismaland has emphasized the importance of resistance based on the redefinition and remediation of media. Culture jamming as an expressive means is a social practice that has an affinity with contemporary social movements (Carducci, 2006).

The varied artworks at Disneyland make visitors feel a subjective experience that is very different from children's theme parks. Many visitors look disappointed, even bored. For some, the park doesn't live up to expectations, while others see the disappointing experience as the heart of a Disneyland parody. Dismaland manages to represent jokes, poor rides, clumsy security guards, unattractive artworks, and disproportionately arranged installations. It seems that the only satisfied visitors were those who saw disappointment as part of the deal and agreed to see Dismaland as a satirical insight into the state of the theme park's mainstream culture. The Dismaland can be read-only through its political messages. It covers unsatisfying messages about the treatment of immigrants, racism, economic hardship, death, and alienation.

Conclusion

Dismaland, as a form of culture jamming, has managed to redefine theme parks for children which are considered "ideal" like Disneyland. Through the art media, which is then videotaped, Dismaland presents satire and builds a satirical discourse of the community's mind that is constantly trapped in an endless consumerist ideology. "Disturbance" is shown by arranging, remediating, and representing the character and brand image of Disneyland by using language embedded in the community's minds through available artistic resources. Dismaland also presents the irony of a hegemonic playground. Visitors of the Dismaland as a part of culture jamming practice are a part of consumer activism. Dismaland is a place with boring and scary objects to reflect the cultural implications of Disneyland's theme park.

In the social analysis, some consider culture jamming as a counter-cultural idea based on capitalism as a counter-productive thing. It causes the counter-culture movement to constantly meet "failures". Culture cannot be "jammed" as it does not include "culture" or "system" as a whole. However, culture jamming can adapt to be an alternative to creative forms of resistance activist movements. It can also be understood that culture jamming does not focus on mobilizing the mass in the context of revolutionary politics that is overthrowing capitalism. But it plays an effective role as an instrument that disrupts the "status quo". Culture jamming analysis needs to consider political and economic aspects to be effective and provocative media to share the message that culture has to be tied to a larger goal. In practice, Jammers can raise broader issues by linking social, global ecological crises, gender, racism, human rights, and other issues. This paper is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of culture jamming to unlock subversive potential in the future.

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