

# Netizen Participation in the Counter Narrative of the Anti-Hoax Movement in Indonesia

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The development of technology and information stimulates the use of social media in social movement activities. In fact, the anti-hoax social movement was initiated online in Indonesia by relying on the collectiveness of netizens to fight the dissemination of hoaxes in cyberspace. There are differences in the characteristics of online and offline social movements in cyberspace, thus, the form and level of netizen participation in the anti-hoax movement are also different following the characteristics of the social media. This research focused on the participation of netizens in fighting hoaxes on social media. The research was conducted using Netnography by studying the activity pattern of netizens in the Forum Anti Fitnah Hasut dan Hoaks (FAFHH), an anti-defamation, incitement and hoax forum on Facebook. The results showed that netizen participation in FAFHH is in the form of digital scoping and counter-narrative. Digital scoping is done by reporting hoaxes spread on social media, while the counter-narrative action consists of fact-checking and spreading refutation results. The level of netizen participation in the anti-hoax movement is quite high. They participate voluntarily in various actions of anti-hoax movement.

**Key words:** *Anti-hoax movement, netizens participation, online social movement.*

## Introduction

*Forum Anti Fitnah Hasut dan Hoaks* (FAFHH), an anti-defamation, incitement and hoax forum, is an anti-hoax movement forum on Facebook. This forum is an action by netizens to fight hoax and hate-speech through an anti-hoax campaign and counter-narrative on social media. According to Septiaji Eko Nugroho, the Chief of the Indonesian anti-defamation community called Masyarakat Anti Fitnah Indonesia (Mafindo) at the Trusted Media Summit on May 5<sup>th</sup> 2018 in Jakarta, anti-hoax movements grow as an antithesis of the community

against the spreading of hoax and hate-speech that cause the uncertainty of information and polarisation in society potentially leading to the disintegration of the nation.

Social media is selected as the movement media because hoaxes and hate-speeches are mostly spread on social media to provoke netizens. The internet is commonly used in social movements due to the facilities provided by this technology. Internet and social media are used by social movement websites as the platform to motivate others to get involved in actions and provide information regarding the actions. Besides, the accounts made on the internet can also be used for individual actions (Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2005).

There are various forms of social media use in social movements such as: organising support for radical movements (Caren, Jower & Gaby, 2012); sharing information and organising support for environmental conservation (Kapriani & Lubis, 2014); organising support for resisting the reclamation in Bali (Galuh, 2016); and organising support for Satinah's case - a victim of violence (Sari and Siahainenia, 2015). Besides from organising support, social media is also commonly used for mobilisation such as: the mobilisation of protests on the government and authority (Boulianne, 2014; Rujigrok, 2016); mobilisation of the environmental conservation movement (Hapsari, 2016); mobilisation to emergent conflicts and resistances; mobilisation of Tunisia's revolution (Breuer, Landman & Farquhar, 2015); and mobilisation of Shuria conflict (Brownlee, 2015). In addition to actions, social media is frequently used to share information of movements and campaigns, raising supports and mobilising netizens to participate in social movements.

The continuity of social movements depends on mobilisation and participation in actions because social movement is principally a collective effort or action (Blumer 1951; Lang & Lang, 1961; Turner & Killian, 1972; in Sztompka, 1993) organised either flexibly without institutionalisation or institutionalised to create a transformation in society. Thus, for extensive participation in social movements it is crucial to be mobilised.

In the anti-hoax movement, netizens initially participate in disseminating the verified information output to perform a counter-narrative against the spreading hoaxes. Sequentially, the participation behaviour of netizens is changing. They are no longer merely distributing verified information but also getting involved in fact checking and verifying information indicated as a hoax. According to those descriptions, this article aimed to provide an illustration regarding the participation of netizens in the anti-hoax movement and the motivation stimulating them to participate.

## Literature Review

The concept of participation is broad; therefore it should not be so rigid so that it can be usable (Servaes, Jacobson & White, 1996). World Bank (1995) identified four types of participation namely: information sharing, consultation, collaboration, and empowerment. The dissemination of information and consultation are considered as the lowest form of participation, while collaboration and empowerment are the highest form of participation (Mefalopoulos, 2008). Meanwhile, participation is also classified as follows: (1) passive participation, meaning that the participants are only attending a meeting; (2) participation for consultation, meaning that the participants are giving consultation without getting involved in the decision making; (3) functional participation, meaning that the participants are sharing information, experiencing and giving recommendations, but having an unequal position; (4) empowered participation, meaning that the participants are taking part in every process of the activity, getting involved in the decision making process, and having an equal position (Mefalopoulos, 2008).

In establishing a movement, social media has a positive relationship with the participation behaviour (Boulianne, 2015). However, only half agree that the relationship is causal and transformative. The characteristics of social media as a network allows the participation of netizens to get connected with the actions involving people within their friendship circle on social media. Social media could also affect the changes in behaviour of netizens. These changes are effective in mobilising netizens on social media to participate in actual activities of a social movement in the community (Kapriani & Lubis, 2014). Social media became the mobilisation structure encouraging the involvement of netizens (Brownlee, 2015). However, according to Castells (2015), participation is caused by a movement connected flexibly by mutual goals and value-sharing. This condition encourages each netizen conceiving similar goals and values to be able to engage and participate in the movement.

In relation to the relationship between social media and participation, Gareth (2004) wrote that the mobility of structure and media is inseparable from the level of participation, the activity of debate, and the issue of organisation. Communication media can enhance the level of the members' participation through information and communication technology associated with three mechanisms of participation namely: the reduction of participation cost; the introduction of collective identity; and community creations. Information and communication Technology (ICT) might involve its members in new contestation activities in cyberspace. In relation to the movement issues, ICT can decrease organisational obstacles at lower level. This article focused on the community creations which then have impact on the collective identity.

A collective action framework is a set of collective beliefs that can encourage and inspire participation in the movement. Gamson (1992) divided the three components of collective action framework considered to be able to encourage the participation namely: a sense of injustice, elements of personal identity, and the factor of agency. Those components can be expressed in the construction of meaning in the movement framing process. Through the framing process, movement issues can be formulated to raise the injustice and collective identity issues. The success of social movement is usually determined by the capability in framing and wrapping the movement issues promoted to be accepted as a problem by public (Gamson, 1992). The motivation that encourages netizens to participate in the anti-hoax movement can be seen from the wrapped issue and collective identity element as well as the agency factor.

### **Methodology**

A netnography method was used in this research to describe an anti-hoax community on Facebook called FAFHH. Data was collected by using the two methods of web-scraping and survey techniques. Web-scraping was performed by posting a program on FAFHH's page, downloading content, extracting data from content, and saving data to a database. The purpose was to produce data extraction from the posts in the forum. The collected data was arranged from September 7, 2017 to September 7, 2019. This data was then processed to produce the data of netizens' participation.

A survey technique was carried out through purposive selection (non-random sampling). Purposive sampling is a sample-collection technique based on consideration focusing on specific objectives (Arikunto, 2010) or a sample-collection technique with certain considerations (Sugiyono, 2012). This technique is used by determining the criteria and characteristics of the sample to be selected. In this research, 150 respondents were selected to be provided with the questionnaire. The questionnaires, distributed in the form of google documents, were distributed from March 19 to 29, 2019. However, only 122 copies were returned. The respondents were selected based on the criteria of being an active member in FAFHH in posting, sending emoticons, commenting, and sharing the forum posts onto their personal accounts. This technique aimed to discover the motivation of members in participating actively in the forum.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### ***FAFHH Membership***

FAFHH was made on September 8, 2015 by two netizens, Harry Sufehmi and Eko Juniarto, who had a concern on social media . The increasing phenomena of the spreading of

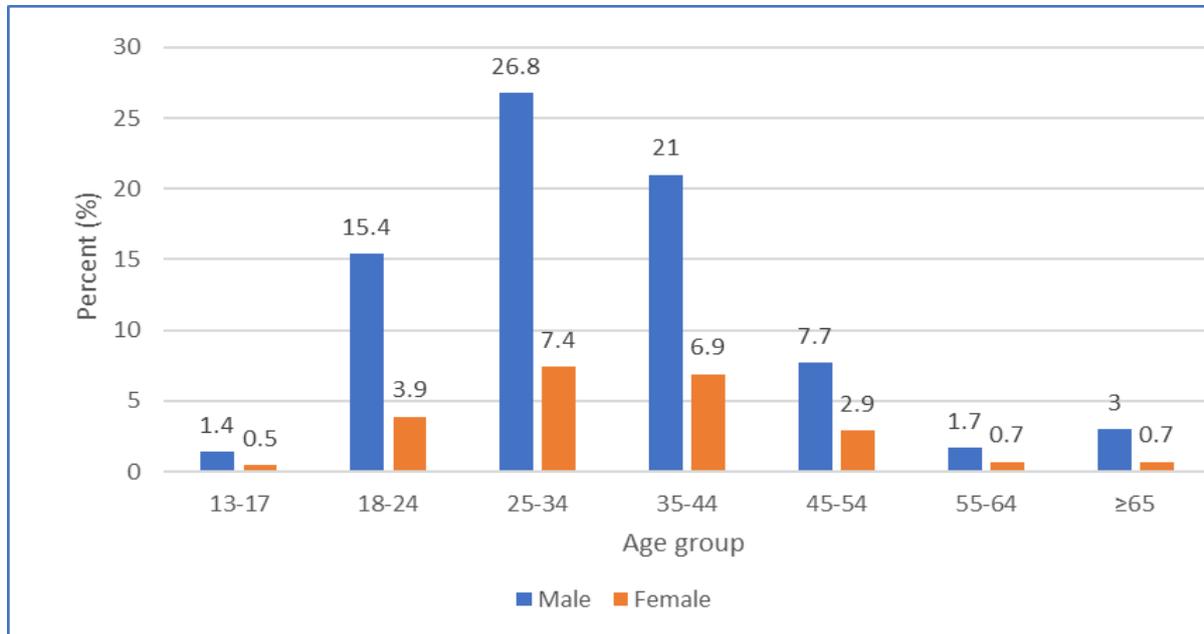
defamation, incitements, hoaxes, and hate-speeches on social media after the 2014 presidential election in Indonesia had motivated them to establish this forum. This condition was highly concerning for various parties because it triggered the increasing polarisation in society due to the political disparity. Furthermore, defamation, incitements, hoaxes and hate-speeches could also lead to SARA (racial, ethnic and religious issues) conflicts.

FAFHH was made on social media and then developed into Masyarakat Anti Fitnah Indonesia (Mafindo)/Indonesian Anti-defamation Community as a social movement organisation aiming to fight hoaxes and improve the digital literacy of society. Despite the establishment of Mafindo that has extensive national and international networks, the existence of FAFHH is still maintained as the instrument to fight hoaxes on social media.

The establishment of FAFHH provides a platform for netizens to discuss and participate in an anti-hoax movement. At the end of September 2015, there were 288 netizens who became the member of FAFHH and six months later in March 2016, the number of FAFHH members increased to 1,293 netizens. On September 8, 2018, there were a total of 58,380 members, and on September 7, 2019, the number of FAFHH members was 75,283 netizens. The increase of this membership was quite significant. It can be seen that in the period of 2016 to 2018, there was a massive increase of membership. This condition is encouraged by the state of this forum as an open group allowing netizens to easily become a member. Nonetheless, social media is made with a concept of community that brings together the same concern of someone toward something. This phenomenon is referred to as the establishment of homophile structure (Spohr, 2017). It is caused by a filter bubble (Pariser, 2010) as a condition that personalises the experience of netizens, which only displays the information compatible with their consumption behaviour on social media.

About 43.4% of the netizens' involvement in FAFHH is due to an invitation from friends who already joined the forum, and 37.7% is because they see their friends' posts about the forum activity. Meanwhile, the remaining 18.9% is due to the advertisement on the Facebook homepage. Thus, participation in FAFHH is caused by network and mobilisation. Social media connects one person to another, developing the relationship based on the interest on similar issues. Therefore, not only based on a network, social media also develops the emotional factor in the contents. The interest of someone in becoming friends with others and joining a community on social media is affected by the uploaded content.

**Figure 1:** The comparison of FAFHH members based on gender (September 7, 2017 - September 7, 2019).



The FAFHH members of 75,283 netizens are spread among 98 cities in Indonesia and concentrated in Java Island with the highest amount of 14,692 people living in Jakarta. Besides, the FAFHH members are also spread across 83 countries. There are 76.9% and 23.1% male and female members, respectively (Source: FAFHH, 2019). In all age ranges, there are more male members than female ones, i.e. teenagers, millennials, adults and the elderly. This shows that; (1) men are more interested in the anti-hoax movement on social media and (2) millennials and adults pay considerable attention to the anti-hoax movement. This result is quite interesting because the assessment conducted by the anti-hoax movement in 2018 showed that the targets of the anti-hoax movement included millennials and women because they were vulnerable to the spread of hoaxes.

The anti-hoax movement on social media is a good example illustrating self-mobilisation, a movement established by netizens based on their own accord to make changes (Hobley, 1996). Society has power over the use of resources to be utilised (Koc-Michalska & Lilleker, 2016). In this context, netizens manage their own websites, social media forums, various media platforms, and the fact-checking tools to be used to fight hoaxes and develop their digital literacy.

### Member Participation

The anti-hoax movement initiated by FAFHH on social media consists of two actions namely digital scoping and counter-narrative. Digital scoping is the mobilisation of netizens to

participate in fighting hoaxes by reporting hoaxes and negative content found on social media. The report can be addressed to:

### 1. Platforms

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have provided a menu to report negative contents such as defamations, incitements, hoaxes, hate-speeches, pornographies and the similar contents. Usually, platforms will directly remove the content considered as problematic, or they will have 3<sup>rd</sup> party fact-checkers label the content as a warning for netizens.

### 2. Aduankonten.ID administered by Ministry of Communication and Information of Republic of Indonesia

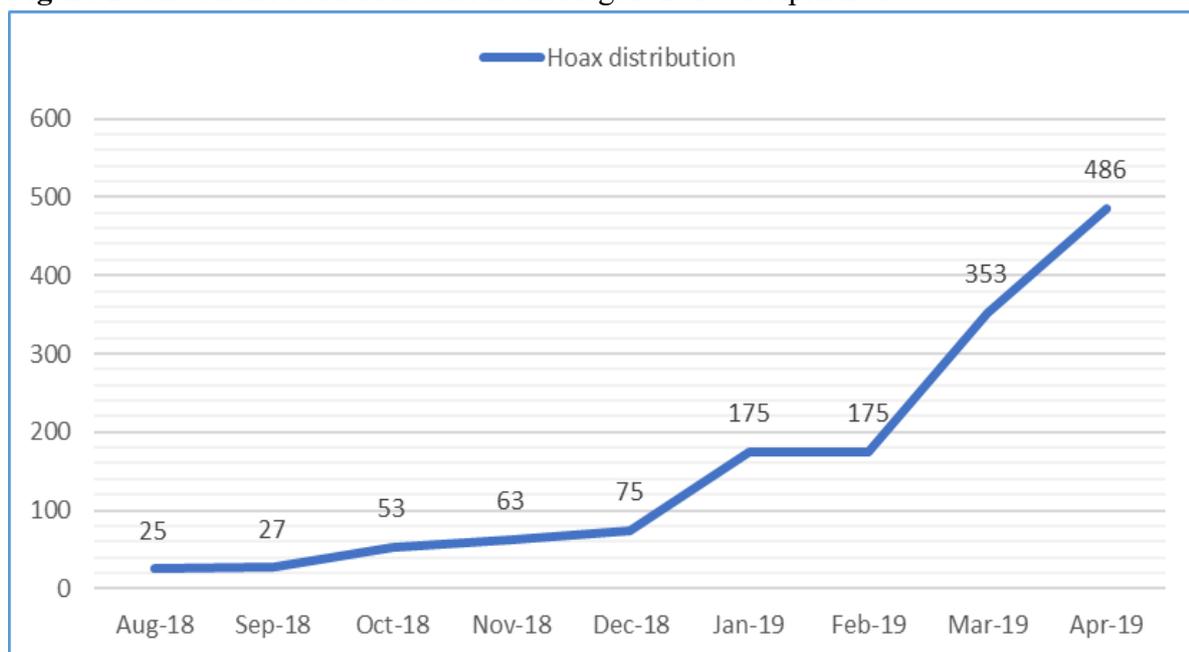
Netizens can report negative contents to Aduankonten.ID by firstly creating an account at the website using email and identity. The report will be received by the desk of aduankonten's team and will be followed up by asking the related platforms to take down the content or block the related site.

### 3. Mafindo

Mafindo also receives complaints regarding negative contents from netizens through FAFHH and a hoax-reporting form available on the [turnbackhoax.id](http://turnbackhoax.id) website. The submitted reports will be processed by the fact-checker team of Mafindo for verification.

Mafindo, as a social movement organisation copying FAFHH, has established a cooperation with the government and platform companies in handling reports of negative content.

**Figure 2:** The distribution of hoaxes from August 2018 to April 2019.



In Figure 2, it can be seen that widespread hoaxes that have been successfully verified, show that society reporting of negative content in digital scoping action has been successful in identifying hoaxes spread on social media. The coordinator of Mafindo's Fact-Checker (2019) mentioned that it was complicated to determine the number of submitted reports in digital scoping because the submitted reports were yet to be extractable. However, this works as an illustration of high numbers of hoaxes that had been uploaded and most of them were from reports submitted by netizens.

Another action performed by FAFHH is counter-narrative. This action is a series of activities undertaken by members consisting of people who perform fact-checking on the information indicated as hoaxes, those who post them on the forum, and those who distribute the rebuttal results on their personal social media accounts to make them viral. Thus, the validity of false information spread among society can be clarified. Of 1,849 posts of fact-checking in FAFHH, 32% is posted by admin, 20.5% is posted by the moderator and 46.7% is posted by members. Of the entire member posts, 72.1% are posted by males and 27.9% posted by female members. Conclusively, the participation of members in fact-checking is quite high and male members have a higher participation rate in fact-checking compared to female members.

**Table 1:** Activity Data of FAFHH

Aspect	Result
Average active member (daily)	16.332
Average post by member (daily)	6
Average comment (daily)	288
Average emoticon (daily)	1.406
Average shared post (daily)	176
Average read post (daily)	9.873

Besides posting the rebuttal, the participation of members in the forum can be seen from their activeness in commenting, giving emoticons and sharing posts. The daily average of active members is 16,332 or 21.7% of the entire FAFHH's members. The number of posts, comments, responses (emoticons) and post-sharing per day presented in Table 1 shows that this forum is quite active, and the participation of its members is high. The dissemination of rebuttal results in the form of counter-narrative was able to reach 9,873 readers daily. This number excluded those who read through the copy-pasted articles posted on other netizen accounts.

The classification of participation in FAFHH can be divided as follows: (1) Passive participation, which is when the members of a forum only read the post; (2) Consultative participation, which is when the members of a forum ask about the validity of information

and give suggestions and inputs in the forum; (3) Functional participation, which is when the members of a forum post emoticons, comments or discussions, and share the rebuttal result; (4) Empowered participation, which is when the members of a forum report hoaxes, perform fact-checking and upload the result on the forum as well as actively refute hoaxes on various social media platforms. Functional participation in a forum refers to the general activities of netizens on social media. However, in empowered participation, the members of the forum not only undertake normative activities, but also have skills in fact-checking and give their time to perform digital scoping and refute hoaxes on various social media platforms. In FAFHH, the member participation was already at the level of empowered participation, because within the forum, admin also teaches the members to be capable of fact-checking and demands a standard for writing posts that fulfills the community requirement.

In a social media group, the admin has the authority to not publish or to delete posts considered to be violating the community and incompatible with the rules of the group. Therefore, participation in this platform is not talking about decision making. However, as expressed by Servaes that flexibility is the superiority of the participation concept in adapting to the strategic approach in a specific situation (Servaes, Jacobson & White, 1996).

In a social media group, regulations regarding the theme of the post, the issues and other technical provisions are required to manage the information flow and prevent the occurrence of useless debate between members. This arrangement is the form of adaption to the platforms. According to the experts, flexibility as the result of adaptation is the weakness of the participation approach because it is easy to be modified and inconsistent (Mefalopoulos, 2008). However, this flexibility is crucial because the form of participation usually follows the objectives of a program or activity, the characteristic of settings, and the situation of stakeholders. Participation follows locality. Such adjustments aim to encourage improvement of participation that can have a good impact or make broader changes.

### **The Mobilisation of Participation Driven by Issues**

Gamson (2009) states that framing a movement is crucial to mobilise the participation of netizens in that social movement. In a social movement, the issues of dissatisfaction toward the situations associated with the social life of the society that contradicts individual values, community values and public values are usually capable of motivating society to get involved in a movement. In the anti-hoax movement, the dissatisfaction issue of netizens toward various phenomena of the spread of negative contents, defamations, incitements and hate-speeches on social media is becoming the instrument in mobilising netizens to participate in the movement. In addition, the element of collective identity, as a movement established to fight the dissatisfaction condition, becomes the stimulation for netizens to get involved. Meanwhile, the factor of agency is related to values embraced and believed by individuals

that are compatible with the values fought in the movement. Those three are correlating to motivate the participation of netizens. Situmorang (2013) mentioned that the actors of changes have an important task in achieving their struggles through the framing of social and injustice issues. This is the way to encourage the target group to participate in social transformations.

**Table 2:** Components and elements motivating netizens to get involved in the anti-hoax movement.

Components	Elements
Dissatisfaction issues	Deception of netizens
	Taking advantage of the ignorance of netizen
	Emerging uncondusive social media
	Emerging segregation in society
	Creating polarisation in the society
	Making profit through hoaxes
Collective Identity	Fighting against hoaxes (false information)
	Digital literacy movement
	Strengthening the national stability
Factor of Agency (Value and norms)	Hoax is against verity
	Provocation causes conflicts
	Hate-speech ruins relationships and inhibits communication
	Defamation is a despicable deed

According to the survey results, the elements motivating netizens to get involved in the anti-hoax movement are coherent with narratives raised by anti-hoax activists to fight hoaxes such as: national divisive hoaxes: digital literacy for the community; turn-back hoaxes; and hoaxes and hate-speeches that are not part of the national culture, are smart in using social media and others. Creating proper narratives in framing issues and wrapping meaning is necessary for a social movement to be accepted by society (Gamson, 1992). The accuracy of narratives and a similarity in perceived problems can mobilise community participation in a movement. Participation can be driven by the similarity between the values held by netizens and the values carried by the anti-hoax movement. In other words, participation is driven by a movement connected flexibly, by mutual goals and by value-sharing (Castells, 2015).

Anti-hoax activists create a framing and dissatisfaction issue concerning: the situation of the spread of negative content; defamation; incitements; hoaxes and hate-speeches as the actions of deception of netizens; taking advantage of the ignorance of netizens to gain profit; causing social media to be unsafe and comfortable for interaction; and emerging segregations and asserting polarisations in society. Those narratives are accompanied by the construction of collective identity on anti-hoax movement as a movement that: fights the spread of negative

content; attempts to improve the digital literacy of community; and the fight for national stability that is beginning to falter by narratives disputes and conflicts on social media. More importantly, the narratives formed in the anti-hoax movement carry common values and norms applicable in society, thus, target groups are moved to voluntarily participate in the anti-hoax movement. Benford & Snow (2000) call this condition as a strategy of winning the narrative war to succeed the social movement.

## **Conclusion**

The journey of FAFHH as an anti-hoax movement in social media has been quite successful in mobilising netizens to participate in fighting hoaxes in Indonesia. Two strategies are implemented. Firstly, digital scoping which acquires lots of reports of various hoaxes spread on social media. Secondly, counter-narratives which are quite successful in fighting the spread of hoaxes through fact-checking processes. These are then spread as narratives to counter the spread of hoaxes. Social media is used as the platform to perform the activities of the movement and to distribute counter-narratives in fighting hoaxes.

The participation of members in fighting hoaxes on social media is quite high, indicated by the daily average number of active members in FAFHH either in reporting hoaxes, fact-checking, discussing or spreading counter-narratives. The ease in distributing information, communication networks, and mobilisation infrastructures enables the participation of netizens in conducting anti-hoax activities. These characteristics of social media encourage netizens to develop self-mobilisation, which in the perspective of Hobley (1996) is the form of community participation through independent initiative taking from external institutions to make changes. Netizens in FAFHH have reached the level of empowered participation, in which they have been actively participated in reporting hoaxes, performing independent fact-checking and actively rebutting hoaxes on various social media platforms.

In a social movement such as anti-hoax movement, it is crucial to create the framing of the movement that reaches the problem of public concern since it can be used as the means to mobilise participation. Subsequently, establishing a collective identity synchronised with the struggle issues, values and norms in the society becomes a critical point for people who want to join a movement. The issues established should be coherent with the problems that concern the society.

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