
Political Rhetoric of Jokowi and Prabowo in the 2019 Presidential Election: A Semiotic Analysis of Tempo Magazine Covers

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Abstract - Tempo magazine's covers depicting the political battle between Jokowi and Prabowo in the context of the 2019 Presidential Election are worth examining. Not only because in 2019, Jokowi and Prabowo met as rivals who defeated each other for the second time after the 2014 Presidential Election. Using semiotic analysis and media agenda setting theory, this study aims to identify the connotational aspects of the figures of Jokowi and Prabowo in the context of the 2019 Presidential Election on various covers of Tempo magazine. This research highlights the importance of the agenda setting process carried out by the Tempo Magazine Editor in determining the cover of Tempo Magazine in the context of the 2019 presidential election in Indonesia. This study finds that Tempo Magazine's covers show no bias toward any presidential candidate, positioning Tempo as a neutral observer of the candidates' political behavior. The covers depict a balance of power leading to societal polarization and support divisions. Moreover, the agenda media discourse shows, instead of building opposition, it suggests a political coalition, reflecting the political communication character of Jokowi administration. According to the study's findings, there is no prejudice or favoritism towards either Prabowo or Jokowi in any of the Tempo covers. The two presidential contenders ultimately worked together in a coalition, despite the fact that they were depicted as rivals.

Keywords: Magazine Cover, Semiotic Analysis, 2019 presidential election, Jokowi, Prabowo

Introduction

Don't judge a book by its cover. That's how popular the phrase has become. Metaphorically, it literally means "don't judge a book by its cover". If the cover is good, it doesn't necessarily mean the content of the book is good. Conversely, if the cover is bad, it doesn't necessarily mean that the content of the book is bad either.

However, that statement is not really relevant anymore, both in terms of lexical meaning and social meaning, to judge the existence of various magazine front covers. In fact, the cover of a magazine, for example, is a strong attraction to invite potential readers to consume the main report. In

the world of journalism, the cover of a magazine does not merely function as a skin that carelessly wraps the content. In fact, the cover itself is more than enough to represent the figure of a particular news organization.

In this way, it can be emphasized that magazine covers can create a clear differentiation between one magazine and another. Women's magazines, for example, feature female figures who are shown as motherly, gentle, caring, and concerned. In contrast, magazines for men also feature female figures as various covers. The women are portrayed as seductive, seductive, wild, filled with sexual desire, and ambitious to win every game.

In this scope, differentiation also refers to what is called identity. So, in this perspective, it is not possible to make magazine covers similar to other magazines, except with the aim of capturing old readers.

Even more than that, if the covers are identical to certain magazines, like Tempo for example, which is more dominant with various political news. The cover there is not just the outermost page that is deliberately displayed to create an aesthetic effect. More than that, the cover can even be a political stance or favoritism in a certain atmosphere of power struggle. That is what is called that the cover of a magazine does not merely have an aspect of visual luxury or beauty, but is able to show political expressions that can no longer be tightly hidden. Thus, opinions are no longer placed in editorial spaces (editorials) that have been deliberately placed on the inside pages, but are shown explicitly on the front cover of the magazine.

It is not too surprising that with this exposure, magazine covers can easily spark political controversy. For example, in 2013, Rolling Stone featured a close-up photo of a young man named Dzhokar Tsarnaev, the perpetrator of the marathon bombings in Boston, USA. The young man's face was presented in the manner of The Doors frontman Jim Morrison, who was both charming and charismatic. By depicting the perpetrator of such a crime, Rolling Stone could be accused of not sympathizing with the victims. In fact, this entertainment magazine could be seen as glorifying, excessively worshiping, someone who massacred innocent people. However, precisely because of this, the magazine can no longer be considered as a provider of entertainment, but rather behind the entertainment are political values and favoritism to certain figures.

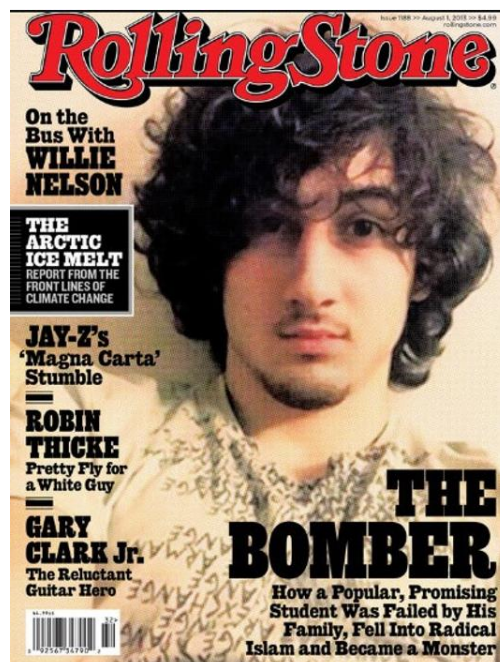


Image 1. Cover of the controversial Rolling Stone magazine

A similar phenomenon also occurs in the context of the mass media industry in Indonesia, represented by Tempo Magazine. For example, in 2001, the cover of the November 18-25, 2001 edition of Tempo Magazine (Figure 2) depicted Akbar Tandjung, a key Golkar Party figure involved in a corruption case at the Logistics Agency (Bulog). Akbar was described as having a long nose like

Pinocchio. As we all know, Pinocchio is a wooden puppet incarnated as a human, who has a habit identical to himself, which is lying. Whenever Pinocchio lies, his nose automatically continues to lengthen. With this cover visual, it can be interpreted that Akbar Tandjung is a well-known politician who likes to lie. The money covering his mouth illustrates that Akbar Tanjung in the Bulog corruption case, through the Tempo cover, is depicted as having lied and received bribes.



Image 2. Akbar Tanjung and the Bulog Case

In the current political context, Tempo Magazine also criticizes our political elites, including President Joko Widodo on the cover of the September 16-22, 2019 edition of Tempo magazine. He is depicted similarly to Akbar Tandjung, although in this context, Jokowi has an elongated nose shadow, but still visualizes the Pinocchio symbol.

In this context, Jokowi is portrayed as a liar because he is considered to be spreading promises to eradicate corruption. This is due to Jokowi's inconsistency in approving regulations that weaken the function of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK).

With this kind of perspective, the covers of Tempo magazine that depict the political battle between Jokowi and Prabowo in the context of the 2019 Presidential Election is worth examining. Not only because in 2019, Jokowi and Prabowo met as rivals who defeated each other for the second time after the 2014 Presidential Election, but the description of the figures of Jokowi versus Prabowo in the various covers showed how the two presidential candidates were loaded with symbols of power competition. This article will ultimately also show Tempo Magazine's stance on the contest of the 2019 presidential election.



Image 3. Jokowi and the weakening of the KPK

State of the Art

Numerous investigations have been carried out to look at Tempo Magazine's cover. This demonstrates the social, political, and scholarly appeal of the magazine's covers. Socially speaking, this indicates that Tempo's covers are highly well-known or well-liked and spark conversations in the larger community. Since the political leaders in authority are the primary subjects of Tempo covers, these covers have the potential to provoke debates and even controversies. Naturally, academically, Tempo's covers can be analyzed from a variety of theoretical, methodological, and more practical angles by academics, presenters, and students.

Barthes' myth analysis is the approach most frequently utilized to examine Tempo's covers. The methods used in this study include breaking down the elements of denotation and connotation and exposing different prevailing ideologies that manifest as meanings ingrained in the covers that have been positioned as the texts being studied. The confrontation between the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) and the police in the Km 50 case is revealed in this analysis by Adrianda (2023). Tempo is regarded as courageous for criticizing the administration and emphasizing the value of law enforcement on the cover addressing this issue.

Hukubun (2025) addresses the portrayal of the technological revolution that must be confronted by giving harmony top priority in order to attain a future that is progressively more advanced through that myth analysis. In the meantime, Pinontoan (2023) use myth analysis to demonstrate how, in an era where capitalism is progressively taking over Indonesia, President Jokowi epitomizes both a politician and a businessman. From a similar angle, Sucipta and Pratiwi (2024) talk about how the visual cues displayed on different Tempo covers might influence political narratives and direct the formation of public opinion.

Tempo's covers are also examined analytically using Peirce's semiotics. In order to support the Corruption Eradication Commission's (KPK) anti-corruption campaign, Pramaskara (2022) uses that semiotic technique to explain how the cover, which shows Jokowi's nose appearing to elongate like Pinocchio, is a metaphor for a leader who betrays his promises to the people.

Prabowo, Indiriwati, and Muslimin (2024) examine the misappropriation of public funds by Aksi Cepat Tanggap (ACT) using the Peircean semiotic technique. The cover shows regular people driving a luxurious car that is occupied by someone who looks so amazing. Sidiq and Adrianda (2023) also employ semiotics that makes use of images, indices, and symbols to address the primary concerns surrounding Anies Baswedan's 2024 presidential campaign.

The study by Puspita, Komarrudin, and Astrid (2025), which examines the Jakarta Regional Head Election (Pilkada), which heavily featured Jokowi, Pramono Anung, and Anies Baswedan, demonstrates similar methodological processes. In the meantime, Wahyudi and Purnomo (2022) used the Peircean semiotic technique to talk about the 2018 terrorist attacks and the catastrophe that happened at the Brimob Command Headquarters (Mako). Rosiani, Indrawati, and Jufrizal (2024) also used this kind of semiotics in their study on the conduct of the People's Consultative Assembly (DPR) members who lied when discussing the Omnibus Law (Job Creation). They resemble Pinocchio dolls on the cover. Using the same methodology, Afandi (2023) addresses the ridiculous budget case from 2019, when Anies Baswedan was Jakarta's governor and set the price of Aica Aibon glue at an incredible level.

A linguistic method is used in several studies on Tempo covers. For instance, a research by Ismiyatini and Prayitno (2022) uses the implicature idea to illustrate the positive and negative sentiments that people have about Jokowi based on those covers. Multimodal discourse analysis was employed in the study by Lubis and Surip (2024), and the findings demonstrated that the verbal and visual texts included in different covers complemented one another and produced cohesive meanings.

Numerous studies demonstrate that many theoretical stances, conceptual analyses, and semiotic techniques from Barthesian and Peircean views have been used to examine the numerous analyses of Tempo's covers. In the meanwhile, the study that follows has some new and distinctive features of its own. Despite methodologically using Barthes' semiotics, this study also highlights elements of political rhetoric as they are shown on Tempo's covers of the two presidential candidates who competed for the presidency in 2019. Examining Jokowi and Prabowo as two individuals who are fiercely competing with one another in a number of ways that have the potential to destroy one another is another area of attention for this study.

Theoretical Framework

There are a number of studies on magazine covers as social, cultural and political phenomena with various theoretical and methodological perspectives. Magazine covers are not just about visual messages and headlines. Iqani (2012) discusses the role of texture, particularly smoothness, in commercial communication, especially in magazine cover images. This is an empirical study that focuses on images of women and cars aimed at the male reader market. It is argued that the smoothness of magazine covers is a semiotic resource that has been embedded with stereotypical and heteronormative conceptions of gender. It is also argued that slick magazine covers are connoted with Western culture, influences and ideologies that underlie these connotations. Looking at this research, it can be seen how signs work not only in visual form, but also through sensory contact that makes male readers feel more comfortable in this patriarchal world.

The debate over the Rolling Stone magazine cover story featuring Dzhokar Tsarnaev, the perpetrator of the Boston Marathon bombing in July 2013, is also a highly considered reference. Jenkins and Tandoc Jr (2015) conducted a study of the online version of the controversial cover story by describing the comments expressing criticism and support for the cover. A qualitative analysis of the comments posted in the first week can shed light on the institutional meaning for Rolling Stone and the cultural meaning for its readers. Thus, by assessing the cover as a critical incident, this research shows how readers, through their comments, are able to participate in the ongoing territory of

journalistic work, joining the journalistic interpretive community in defining professional roles, norms and routines.

The disparity in gender-based sports news coverage is well known. However, there are still few who discuss these disparities in various visual aspects of sports news, in this case the covers of various sports magazines themselves. Wasike's (2017) study of Sports Illustrated and ESPN The Magazine examines sexualization, camera angles, and nonverbal communication keys that influence gender issues. As a result, women appearing on the magazine covers are portrayed in a more sexualized manner than men, for example in the exposure of body skin and seductive poses. Meanwhile, men were depicted in more active poses and the cover titles emphasized the gender of athletic achievement over women. In addition, this study shows that women are shown smiling more as well as being photographed with more positive camera angles.

Another study centers on the figure of a female politician in the United States, Hillary Clinton. In this regard, Clinton has indeed been a pioneer for political careers, thus becoming the center of media attention for decades. By examining 21 magazine covers in the United States that made reports as a former First Lady and in 2016 as a Democratic presidential candidate, thus in the period between 2010 and 2015, it can be described how Clinton talked about herself and the relationship between gender, power, and politics. By applying visual discourse analysis, a picture of Clinton as power-hungry, emasculating, and a politician who works in secret is obtained. The various magazine covers overtly and covertly warned citizens about her authenticity and ambition. Some of the coverage reaffirmed misogynistic representations that disadvantage female politicians (Bachmann, Harp and Loke 2017).

The discussion of Clinton as a female politician featured on the cover was also conducted by Taylor and Pye (2019). The analysis was conducted on Time Magazine covers from the time Clinton became First Lady in 1992 until she was hopefully involved in the presidential election. Basing on political rhetoric and visuals as the main lens, the analysis of each cover examines two main texts, namely Clinton's image as encoded by the social semiotics approach and editorial reports from Time's senior writers. Rhetorically, it can be argued that Clinton through her image has been mediated as a threat to political hegemony.

Through this reporting and image construction Clinton reaffirmed normative journalism and favored the status quo and culminated in Clinton being celebrated as a diplomat, senator, and wife while disciplining her image as a candidate who posed a threat to the presidency of the United States. The conclusion of this study is that each magazine cover has broader implications for women politicians as executive leaders. Thus, a new epistemological and ideological understanding is needed in carrying out reportage on women politicians.

In addition to Hillary Clinton being featured on the cover of the magazine, another politician who is also in the spotlight in this regard is Donald Trump. A total of 45 magazine covers featuring Trump during the 2016 presidential election campaign were analyzed. Surprisingly, the majority of the magazine covers contained apocalyptic rhetoric to appeal to consumers rather than the political leanings of the magazines. Applying an analysis of the characteristics of apocalyptic rhetoric on the magazine covers yields implications about the direction of magazine coverage, visual rhetoric and presidential campaigns. In this regard, Trump with his apocalyptic rhetoric is identified with the creation of fear, hatred, and poisonous substances.

Magazines and their Role in Socio-Political Issues

Magazines are not just a type of print media that has been around for several hundred years. That's because magazines also have an important role to play: since the 1740s, they have played a key role in social and political life, becoming the earliest national mass medium in America. The magazines created a number of key spaces to discuss the major issues of the era, such as public education, the abolition of slavery, women's right to vote in elections, literacy, and the Civil War.

In the nineteenth century, magazines became educational forums for women who were barred from higher education and from national political life. That's an early overview of the social and political role of magazines. If traced further, magazines first appeared in the seventeenth century in France in the form of catalogs and various records among booksellers. In fact, the word magazine comes from the French magasin which means "warehouse", a place of storage. The earliest magazines were indeed used as "warehouses" for various writings and reports that were mostly taken from

various newspapers. Today, magazines broadly refer to weekly or monthly collections of articles, stories and advertisements published in a tabloid style that is smaller than newspapers and has more pages (Campbell, Martin and Bettina 2016).

General Theory of Magazines

Extrapolating further, the essential characteristics of magazines can be presented in the General Theory of Magazines, namely (1) magazines always have a precisely defined target audience; (2) magazines base their content on the needs, desires, hopes, and fears of that defined audience; (3) magazines develop a bond of trust with their readership; (4) magazines provide a space for community-like interactions with their readers and among their readers; and (5) magazines can respond quickly and flexibly to changes in their readership and in wider society (Holmes and Nice 2012; Holmes 2020).

When it comes to magazine covers, there are principles that can characterize them, namely that they work as a kind of wrapping paper medium, but there is a promise of a reward in the form of the content inside. Different colors and styles are at the heart of magazine covers. It, as it turns out, has more than just the power to encourage potential buyers to take a look at what's inside. There are five types of cover design and content strategies in this regard, namely (1) posters featuring a single image and logo with no headline; (2) one theme, one image, which is a few words to help identify the subject of the image; (3) multi-theme, one image, which is a headline for a number of reports with one dominant image; (4) multi-theme, multi-image, which is a collage-type approach; and (5) all typographic, which means that there are no photos or illustrations (Spiker 2015).

Material and Methodology

This research is descriptive, which means that it aims to present a picture of the specific details of a situation, social background, or relationships. The emphasis in descriptive research is on starting the study with a well-defined issue or question and attempting to describe it accurately. The result of this research is a detailed description of a subject matter or answers to research questions (Neuman 2014).

To get answers, we use Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic method (Berger 2016). According to him, semiotics emphasizes that every sign has two interrelated aspects, namely the signifier, for example in the form of sound or image, and the signified, which is a concept or meaning. Furthermore, semiotics can describe one way to read various signs.

First, denotation, which can be understood as the first order of signification in Saussure's thought. That is, denotation describes the relationship between signifier and signified in a sign itself and the sign with reference to external reality. Denotation refers to the practical, tangible meaning of the sign. For example, a photo portrait does mean a certain street in an urban area surrounded by buildings. Second, connotation can be defined as the second order of meaning. In connotation, it can be seen how part of the human process treats a particular street photograph, namely the choice of what to include in the shooting frame, focus, lens aperture settings, camera angle of view, film quality, and so on. In summary, it can be asserted that denotation shows what is photographed. Meanwhile, connotation emphasizes how an object is photographed (Fiske 2011: 80-81). In another formulation, denotation is the straightforward meaning, the meaning of certain words found in the dictionary. Meanwhile, connotation is a figurative meaning that cannot be simply linked by referring to certain words literally, as they are.

The corpus of this research consists of nine Tempo covers published before, during, and after the 2019 Presidential Election. The magazine covers include: (1) *Bayang-Bayang Tim Bayangan* (29 Oktober-4 November 2018); (2) *Kampanye Setengah Hati* (19-25 November 2018); (3) *Mulutmu Harimaumu* (3-9 Desember 2018); (4) *Petai Hampa Debat Presiden* (21-27 Januari 2019); (5) *Perang Bubat di Tanah Jawa* (25 Februari-3 Maret 2019); (6) *Berebut Suara Kaum Sarungan* (4-10 Maret 2019); (7) *Rahasia Kemenangan* (22-28 April 2019); (8) *Benci Rindu Dua Seteru* (24-30 Juni 2019); and (9) *Yang Lalu Biar Berlalu* (1-7 Juli 2019).

Result and Discussion

This chapter discusses the political battle between Jokowi and Prabowo in the 2019 presidential election headlines published in the covers of Tempo magazine from October to December 2019. The

covers chosen are those that explicitly show the figures of Jokowi and Prabowo during the period, or to be more specific, during the pre-campaign period, during the campaign and after the 2019 presidential election campaign.

The Rhetoric of Populist Candidates

The first episode of Tempo magazine's cover featuring Jokowi-Prabowo figures in the pre-campaign period was present in the October 29 - November 4, 2018 edition highlighting the topic of the shadow teams of the two 2019 presidential candidates. The cover of Tempo in this edition represents it in the magazine cover with a personification style and metaphor of elephants and humans as riders. A shadow team is a term for the existence of an unofficial institution that oversees a presidential candidate and is responsible for strategic issues of winning. This institution consists of several confidants of the presidential candidate himself (Foster, 2010).

The cover of this edition features Jokowi and Prabowo dressed in all white riding their respective horses. The horse shape of this edition's cover is the main highlight. If you look closely, the two presidential candidates are not actually depicted riding horses, but horse puppets whose legs and bodies are controlled by two pairs of humans for each presidential candidate. A caption entitled "The Shadow of the Shadow Team" appears as the main lead of the cover. The sentence caption of the lead reads "Facing the Election, Both Presidential Candidates Formed Underground Success Teams. Who Are They?".

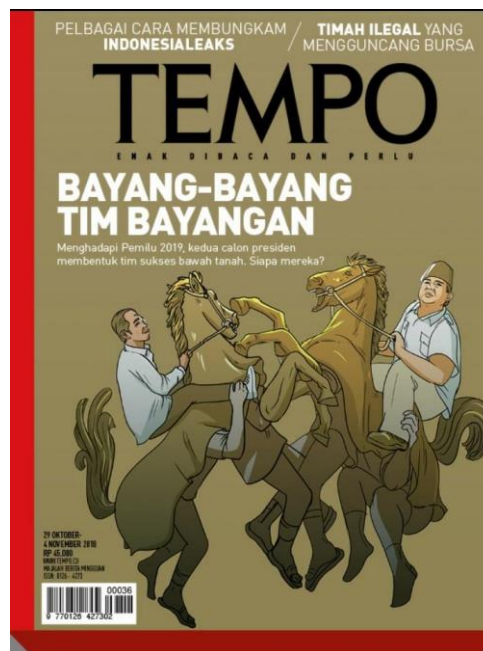


Image 4. Tempo Magazine, October 29 - November 4, 2018 edition

The horse is depicted as a metaphorical tool or a place where the two candidates fight, complete with images that are identical to war vehicles. What is interesting about the cover of this edition is that the horse is present in both denotative and connotative forms (signifiers). At the same time, the two presidential candidates are seen riding them as the personification of the power of war, but on the other hand, it appears that the horses are not full horses, but puppets with human bodies and legs behind them.

The personification and portrayal of the two presidential candidates are even described as similar, each having four legs and two hands to support the other. This is an indication that Tempo has a point of view that both Jokowi and Prabowo have shadow teams that are equally strong and have equal authority in determining the direction and movement of the campaign dynamics.

Furthermore, the October 29 - November 4, 2018 edition of Tempo explains the names of the shadow team members, both official and speculative figures about who is indicated to be in the winning bodies of Jokowi and Prabowo. These speculative names are the main focus of the discussion and agenda, as the cover implies.

Furthermore, the pre-campaign period again presents the figures of Jokowi and Prabowo in the November 19-25, 2018 edition. If in the previous edition the figures of Jokowi and Prabowo were depicted riding a horse puppet with the same depiction, shape, and metaphor, in this edition they are actually depicted riding two different means of transportation. Jokowi wears a denim jacket while riding his iconic big motorcycle (*moge*), while Prabowo is still depicted riding a horse with brownish-white clothes and a cap on his head.



Image 5. Tempo Magazine, November 19-25, 2018 edition

Interestingly, this edition featured a long caption or anchorage titled "Half-hearted Campaign: Prioritizing Legislative Elections, Supporting Parties of Presidential Candidates are Reluctant to Sell Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto. Party cadres are fighting, some are defecting. Except PDI Perjuangan and Gerindra. Party votes expected to plummet". The caption, which in semiotic studies is called a long anchorage, seems to explain the significance of the fading images of Jokowi and Prabowo's respective vehicles. Syntagmatically, the two are positioned parallel. Prabowo's horse and Jokowi's *moge* are two means of transportation that are identical to their personas, however, both of these identities are portrayed as being destroyed at the back.

In the November 19-25, 2018 edition, Tempo seemed to highlight the lack of solidity of the coalition parties of each presidential candidate, which affected the wheels of the winning coalition of each candidate. The back of Jokowi and Prabowo's vehicle is a metaphor for the porousness and destruction of the main engine supporting their movement in the presidential election. This is then accentuated by Tempo in the anchorage of the image which explains that the coalition parties (except the main parties of the two candidates) are more focused on legislative election matters where the number of their seats in parliament is very important. This cover absolutely explains the fragmentation between the parties supporting each candidate (illustrated connotatively in the scattered components of each candidate's vehicle).

It is also noteworthy that on the cover of the November 19-28, 2018 edition, both presidential candidates' faces are depicted as indifferent to the situation on their vehicles. Jokowi is even depicted with a grimace and Prabowo is depicted as having to lift his body as a sign of someone who wants to go faster while riding a horse.

The indifferent expressions of the two presidential candidates can be understood from two perspectives. *First*, they do not care at all about the internal conditions of their supporting political parties. This assumption can be strengthened by the fact that PDIP and Gerindra, as the main parties supporting the two presidential candidates, were the two strongest parties in the previous election,

even competing fiercely in the top arena of the first and second positions in the national constituent vote. The two candidates represent the two ruling political parties that have a strong bargaining position so that they do not intensely need the support of other political parties for the electoral threshold.

This assumption is even reinforced in the cover caption, which explains that parties that are half-hearted and not focused on supporting presidential candidates are more concerned with their cadres, not the institution as a whole. Thus, the fragmentation of these cadres is not considered significant in maintaining the integrity of the coalition building chaired by PDIP and Gerindra. The *second* assumption is that each candidate is ignorant of the fragmentation involving the cadres of their supporting parties. The most important thing for each candidate is to keep moving forward despite the loss of energy from their political vehicles. The optimism of the main supporting parties is unstoppable with the fragmentation of the cadres of the coalition parties and a part that is considered natural in political contestation.

The cover of Tempo magazine that comes after this edition is the most interesting throughout the pre-campaign period. The December 3-9, 2018 edition contained a picture of Jokowi and Prabowo throwing a bubble, which is commonly used in the world of caricatures to show dialog or conversation between characters (Berger, 2010).



Image 6. Tempo Magazine, December 3-9, 2018 edition

The cover of this edition also contains a caption and anchorage entitled "Your Tiger's Mouth: *Sontoloyo*, *Genderuwo*, *Tampang Boyolali*, *Tempeh* as thin as an ATM Card. How the words were conceived, processed and delivered to win the 2019 campaign." The focal point of the Tempo cover representation in this edition is the "political rhetoric" of each presidential candidate. In line with the content of the discussion, this edition highlights the presence of popular terms such as "*sontoloyo*" "*genderuwo*", "*wajah Boyolali*" which are surprisingly present in the rhetoric of the two presidential candidates. The cultural studies perspective views this as vernacular language politics, namely the system of grammar along with diction or dialect that is commonly used and exchanged in the daily lives of the general public (Barker & Jane, 2016). In it we can understand a value that is shared together and becomes a linguistic identity. Although related words or diction are understood either literally or connotatively.

In this context, the term "*sontoloyo*" came out of the mouth of Joko Widodo as President of the Republic of Indonesia and presidential candidate in the 2019 presidential election during the land certificate distribution event in Jakarta (Firmansyah, 2018). He used this term to refer to a group of politicians who like to pit people against each other in uncivilized ways in order to gain power. Meanwhile, the word "*genderuwo*" appeared at a land certificate distribution event in Tegal, Central

Java. This term emerged from Jokowi's mouth as a form of satire on politicians, who often create frightening narratives that make the public anxious.

These two words appeared at the end of 2018 from Jokowi, who at the time was acting as president and Indonesian presidential candidate for the 2019 election. The aim of this rhetoric was clearly aimed at his political competitors, namely Prabowo Subianto's camp. Interestingly, Prabowo's camp also used a similar technique by satirizing Joko Widodo's government. It started with the "Boyolali look" rhetoric expressed by Prabowo at the inauguration of the Prabowo-Sandi Winning Body Office in Boyolali. These words were uttered by Prabowo when criticizing poverty and relating it to someone's unconvincing face when entering a star hotel (Rika, 2018).

However, this sentence was cut to corner Prabowo, who was deemed to be demeaning the residents of Boyolali, a district in Central Java that is understood to be the territory of the PDIP, the main party supporting Joko Widodo. Not long after the controversy over the statement "Boyolali looks" surfaced, vice presidential candidate Sandiaga Uno launched a satire entitled "Tempeh as thin as an ATM" when he gave a statement at a press conference session at Prabowo's residence. Once again, these remarks received a strong response from Jokowi's camp, requiring clarification regarding market conditions and the suitability of tempeh as a staple food (Wildansyah, 2018).

This rhetorical contest in vernacular language was revealed by Tempo magazine in the December 3–9, 2018 edition. Both parties took advantage of the controversy contained in populist discourses of this kind, which, of course, had been prepared in advance by their respective winning teams. Interestingly, not all of this populist and satirical discourse is sympathetic among potential voters. Prabowo's tactic of conveying the "Boyolali look" discourse and Sandiaga Uno's statement about tempeh being "as thin as an ATM" did not produce a populist narrative, especially among swing voters (voters who have not yet made their political choices).

During the pre-campaign election period, Tempo Magazine seemed to emphasize its discussion of external factors that were intertwined and involved between the two presidential candidates. Starting from the spotlight on the existence of the shadow team, the commitment of the coalition of each party supporting the two main parties, which are concentrating on the 2019 presidential election (PDIP and Gerindra), to the popular rhetorical war of each candidate as a result of the ideas and strategies of the internal team before being thrown into the race. public.

This choice of point of view is not only reflected in the cover caricature image but also in the main caption of each edition. Tempo's wise steps can be seen as part of political literacy for its readers so that they know in full who and what the people behind the two presidential candidates are doing, along with their wars, which are no less important in the era of open electoral democracy.

The two presidential candidates were not introduced independently, but appeared to the public after a series of internal negotiations and self-image lobbies that had been carefully prepared beforehand. What happened then was a series of dynamics of community response that culminated in the narrative of the actual campaign period.

Presidential Election as a Battle for Javanese Ruler

The campaign period is the most interesting period in democratic contestation. In the 2019 presidential election in Indonesia, this period full of intrigue stretched from January to March 2019. Joko Widodo, as the incumbent who was challenged again by his old rival Prabowo Subianto, had to convince the Indonesian people to re-elect him. On the other hand, Prabowo, as a challenger to the incumbent, must try hard to appear as an alternative figure who will at least provide fresh air for the Indonesian people after 5 years of being led by Joko Widodo.

Tempo Magazine dissected the dynamics of this period and it was manifested on its magazine cover at least 3 times during the campaign period from January to March 2019. As previously happened in the direct presidential election in Indonesia, this period was filled with the dynamics of national campaign activities such as open debates, visits directly by going into the community, to a strategy to convince Muslim voters as the largest voter base in Indonesia. These three big themes are presented by Tempo magazine through its covers during the 2019 Presidential Election campaign period.

On the first cover of Tempo magazine that appeared during this campaign period, denotatively, the figures of Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto were seen intimately doing a selfie pose (a selfie style using a cell phone camera). Joko Widodo is seen wearing a white shirt and cap. Meanwhile,

Prabowo Subianto was presented wearing formal attire with a jacket, red tie, and skullcap. Both of them are also seen showing different finger gestures. Joko Widodo showed an index finger gesture, and Prabowo showed a thumb and index finger gesture.



Image 7. Tempo, January 21-27, 2019 edition

What's interesting about the Tempo magazine album cover dated 21-27 January 2019 is the presence in the background of 4 photos of victims of the disappearance of activists in 1998, including Dedi Hamdun (disappeared 29 May 1997), Sonny (disappeared 26 April 1997), Yani Afri (disappeared 26 April 1997), Novel Alkatiri (disappeared 29 May 1997) and 1 photo of Novel Baswedan as a victim of acid attack when he was still a KPK investigator. Furthermore, there is also a sentence captioning the cover image (anchorage) entitled "The Empty Map of the Presidential Debate".

From the signifier aspect, the Tempo cover image for this edition clearly shows two presidential candidates competing in the 2019 presidential candidate debate with the shadow of past criminal events as the background. The display of smiling poses from the two presidential candidates is the final marker that sews the relationship between the denotative components of the Tempo cover image for the 21-27 January 2019 edition. Furthermore, after the identification of the series of denotative components, the connotative element appears as a signifier to reveal what is meant, which is actually intended to be conveyed in the form of pictures, caricatures, or popular writing. The Tempo album cover for the January 21-27, 2019 edition, explicitly explores what happened during the event entitled the 2019 presidential candidate debate.

Talking about the democratic process, the open debate event for presidential candidates is an important celebration. Not only as a means of socializing potential leaders but also to test the competency of each candidate. Tempo magazine highlighted this incident by presenting the context of the past events of the 1998 mass kidnapping and the case of throwing acid on former Corruption Eradication Commission investigator Novel Baswedan as a historical burden that should be of concern to both presidential candidates. Ironically, the two presidential candidates ignored the burden of history and social issues during the presidential debate in January 2019.

This argument can be connotatively interpreted through the presence of Jokowi and Prabowo's happy attitude while taking cheerful selfies and holding up finger symbols as a code of support for their respective supporting candidates. Meanwhile, on the other hand, the background, with the display of images of the four missing victims in the 1998 kidnapping, plus the stagnation of law enforcement for Novel Baswedan in a somber tone, explains the lack of attention of the two presidential candidates to these issues.

This series of caricatures can also be read as an omission from the two presidential candidates regarding past law enforcement cases, even though both of them certainly understand the historical facts. However, he chose not to discuss it at all in the presidential candidate debate.

This argument is strengthened by the caption on the image (anchorage) entitled *Hampa Presidential Debate*. The term *petai* hollow is a figure of speech in Indonesian which means "nonsense" or "boast" (KBBI, 2016). By looking at all the images and captions in two columns, namely syntagmatic and paradigmatic, it can be concluded that Tempo magazine was disappointed with the performance of the two candidate pairs on the presidential debate stage during the campaign. The smiles of the two candidates while turning their backs on the list of unfinished past crimes, seemed to show that the context of the debate, which was supposed to touch on substantial political and legal matters, had become dry and only ended in clichés in the entertainment stage entitled "2019 Presidential Candidate Debate".

The second cover of Tempo magazine, which presents two pairs of presidential candidates during the campaign period, is back in the 25 February-3 March 2019 edition. In this period, competition is getting tighter considering that various public activities such as campaigns and national debates have taken place so that there is no friction between supporters at the grassroots can be avoided as a consequence of democracy. The cover of Tempo magazine depicts the period from late February to early March 2019 using an iconographic approach to popular culture icons (Sebeok, 2001).

In this edition, the cover of Tempo magazine adopts the cover of the game PUBG (Players Unknown's Battleground), a digital-based game that is very popular among contemporary young people. For context, this game is the product of a game developer from South Korea. PUBG is a game with multiplayer characters whose mission is to wage war and eliminate as many enemies as possible in order to win the game. Denotatively, this image completely adopts the cover of the PUBG game, complete with modern warfare equipment such as an automatic long-barreled rifle, multi-purpose backpack, steel helmet, belt and gun holster (holster belt), and gloves. The two figures (Jokowi and Prabowo) are depicted fighting with modern warfare equipment, complete with their respective colored pants.



Image 8. Tempo Magazine, February 25 - March 3, 2019 edition

The interesting thing on the cover of the 25 February - 3 March 2019 edition is the presence of the Borobudur temple as the background to the location of the war and the caption "Bubat War in Java Land". This kind of illustration technique is included in the type of iconographic adaptation of

caricature. In this technique, the signified element has been culturally approved by the reader. This means that the illustrator just has to adopt the cultural elements that have been given from popular iconography and then attach them to the subjects of the image (Barthes, 1977).

The caption "Bubat War in Java" became adaptive jargon with an illustration of the iconic PUBG game. The Bubab War itself was a Javanese war in the 14th century, to be precise in 1357 AD. This war is better remembered as a war between the Majapahit Kingdom and the Sunda Kingdom in order to expand its territory. This war is very iconic considering that this war is a symbol of the disagreement between the Javanese and Sundanese people to this day. This socio-historical context of intertextuality is presented again on the cover of Tempo magazine, 25 February – 3 March 2019 edition.

Java land, as the key point for the struggle for power as well as the largest voting barn in Indonesia, is the setting for modern warfare typical of PUBG with two main subjects, Jokowi and Prabowo. It is interesting to note that West Java was the province with the highest number of Prabowo voters in the 2014 presidential election (katadata.co.id, 2019). On the other hand, Central Java and East Java have a large base of Jokowi voters (Azanella, 2019). This logic of binary opposition, which is closely related to the socio-historical context, is presented again on the cover of Tempo magazine, February 25–March 3, 2019 edition. Jokowi and Prabowo are depicted as representatives of the two largest rulers of Java, respectively, in the western and eastern parts, who are currently fighting, fighting for the influence and sympathy of voters with the most contemporary form of intertextuality called the sophisticated PUBG war.

Semiotics, in the structuralist tradition, pays attention to the aspect of metonymy, where some signs can represent the whole. A small number of signs, for example, ornaments, colors, or silhouettes, represent the entirety of the large object in question. Its position in a text's syntagmatic sequence also influences its representativeness (Hawkes, 2003). Likewise, the March 4–10, 2019 edition of Tempo Magazine depicts the figures of Jokowi and Prabowo standing side by side, covered in green sarongs, at the same time. Prabowo is depicted with a smiling pose, while Jokowi is presented with an anxious expression.



Image 9. Tempo Magazine, March 4-10, 2019 edition

Furthermore, in this edition, the Tempo cover is also given a green accent, which matches the color of Jokowi and Prabowo's covers. This is an indication of the theme of Tempo magazine, which specifically emphasizes the importance of the position of Muslims, especially within the Nahdlatul Ulama environment. This argument is confirmed by the presence of image captions (captions), which consist of one lead caption and one sentence explanation from the lead. This style of caption

placement (anchorage) did not appear in the two previous editions, which featured Jokowi and Prabowo during the 2019 presidential election campaign.

The image caption appears under the heading "Seizing the Votes of the Sarungan People" and is followed by the complementary caption "Regarding Presidential Candidates, Kiai Nahdlatul Ulama is Divided. What are the Jokowi and Prabowo camps doing to persuade them?" The appearance of complementary image captions is read as an accentuation of the message to be conveyed. The urgency and importance of the issue of the position of Muslims is something that is important to discuss in a more complex manner, starting from the display of the Tempo cover in such a way. The smile on Prabowo's face is a sign of his confidence in attracting Muslim voters, as he has successfully done in Muslim voting pockets in West Java, Jakarta, and West Sumatra. The image of his voters being attached to hardline Islamic groups is also another indicator of Prabowo's confident, smiling face on the cover of the March 4–10, 2019 edition (Ansari & Khalisotussurur, 2018).

On the other hand, Jokowi's restless expression on this cover is a connotative indication of the extra effort that his camp must make to convince Islamic voters in the 2019 presidential election. This sign correlates with the social fact that Jokowi and his supporting party are often confronted at odds with Islamic groups throughout the event. 2019 presidential election (Erwanti, 2018). Jokowi's nervous expression is a symbol of his lack of confidence in gaining the votes of Muslims as significantly as Prabowo, who is depicted with a *jumawa* expression. This binary opposition (Chandler, 2007) is what Tempo is trying to play in its caricature in this edition.

Islam is a unifying agenda for the two candidates in the 2019 presidential election, which, on the one hand, becomes the binary political identity of their constituents. This caricature is the final caricature in the 2019 presidential election campaign episode, which features two candidate figures, namely Jokowi and Prabowo. The signal that is being conveyed is how Islam is always the ultimate weapon in every constituent battle, especially for presidential candidates. The big agenda is about how to win the votes of Muslims, who at the grassroots are divided into two big camps, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, as a populist political project for the 2019 presidential election contest.

During the campaign, Tempo highlighted the role and existence of the teams behind the two presidential candidates. During the campaign period, the images of the two presidential candidates became the main menu. They are immediately depicted dueling each other exclusively on different arena levels.

Starting from the debate arena, the iconography of modern Javanese war, to the struggle for votes for the NU Muslim community, Apart from that, the entire series of caricatures featuring Jokowi-Prabowo throughout the campaign period is present in the personification of the two presidential candidates in a socio-historical setting that is tried to be attached to both of them. Humanitarian issues such as the disappearance of people and the incomplete legal case of Novel Baswedan, the segregation of the island of Java between west and east, which has re-emerged as a result of the candidacy of the two, and all efforts to get closer to the largest Muslim group in the country.

Tempo seems to provide a discourse on each cover featuring the figures of Jokowi and Prabowo in the form of a battle between two contemporary Indonesian political masters who cannot be separated from the cultural roots of the voting public. This aspect differentiates Tempo's emphasis compared to the period before the campaign.

From Rivalry to Unity: The Path to Political Reconciliation

The events in Indonesian politics were perhaps the most shocking aspect of the 2019 media scene. The exhausting campaign that began in late 2018 and lasted until the presidential election in April 2019 polarized the public, with vehement legal challenges from one of the presidential candidate pairs, coupled with the uproar on social media. It all culminated in an anticlimax when Prabowo Subianto, Jokowi's challenger since the 2014 presidential election, became a part of Jokowi's administration in the 2019 cabinet. The first issue of Tempo Magazine that discussed the main outcomes of the 2019 presidential election was released on April 22-28, 2019, just a few days after the election day.



Image 10. Tempo Magazine, April 22-28, 2019 edition

This issue was the first to feature a cover depicting Jokowi and Prabowo following the 2019 presidential election held on April 17, 2019. In this issue, Tempo magazine presents a cover where Jokowi and Prabowo are each painting a map of Indonesia. On the left side, Prabowo is seen coloring the map of the island of Sumatra with haphazard contour lines, his face flushed, indicating a hurried and messy approach. Conversely, on the right side, Jokowi is depicted painting the island of Java with red ink, in a neat manner, resulting in a more organized depiction.

A caption titled 'Secret of Victory' is also featured, with an anchoring sentence stating, 'Leading in the quick count, Jokowi's vote tally has not moved compared to the 2014 election. Due to hoaxes or other reasons?' The commentary on the cover of this issue of Tempo magazine is speculative about the election results based on the quick count. Prabowo's erratic coloring of the Sumatra portion of the map indicates that the island, especially its western part, is a stronghold of his supporters (Anugerah & Marta, 2019). Prabowo's sporadic scribbling with a frustrated expression suggests that he is trailing in the quick count vote tally.

Conversely, Jokowi's calm face and gestures signal that he will once again become the President of the Republic of Indonesia, having successfully garnered votes on the island of Java, particularly in the central and eastern regions. The use of red on Jokowi's canvas serves as a metonym for the dominance of his main supporting party since the 2014 elections. These two contrasting faces are indicative of what actually occurred in the previous presidential elections.

Connotatively, the red color fills only the central and eastern parts of Java but not the west. Tempo suggests that the western part of Java, especially West Java and Banten, are areas unfriendly to Jokowi, as evidenced by his and his vice-president's lackluster vote tallies in the last two Indonesian presidential elections (Saleh, 2019).

The contrast shown by Tempo magazine through the depictions of Jokowi and Prabowo serves as a sign that Prabowo is unable to systematically manage his winning regions. The two islands shown, Sumatra and Java, become metonymy that depict the two major regions pivotal to the presidential election results of the two candidates. Both have strong bases on these islands, which have the largest populations in Indonesia. The difference is that Jokowi is able to organize his constituents, while Prabowo is not.

The subsequent issue following the 2019 presidential election represents an anticlimax to the battle believed to be protracted and never-ending between two giants of Indonesian politics, each in their respective eras. However, what actually transpired was a reconciliation between these figures in carrying out their national political agendas. This indication was already perceivable, at least from

what was implicitly and explicitly illustrated on the cover of the Tempo magazine edition of June 24-30, 2019.

This issue's cover features Jokowi and Prabowo performing a military salute, demonstrated by their clasped fists as a sign of agreement. Both are depicted wearing white attire, consistent with the image they have presented to the public thus far.



Image 11. Tempo Magazine, June 24-30, 2019 edition

The photo caption presents a political speculation titled *Love-Hate: The Rivals' Duel*, followed by a description which outlines the main discussion of this issue: Outside the Constitutional Court, the camps of the presidential candidates sent representatives to design a reconciliation involving ministerial positions, parliamentary leadership, and presidential advisory roles as compensations. This cover connotatively reads as a surprise twist in the electoral process. Jokowi and Prabowo are seen emerging from a ballot box while giving a military-style salute as a sign of agreement. This portrayal emphasizes the element of a twist or a distortion of reality from the initial expectations.

Tempo magazine positions Jokowi and Prabowo as having a significant agenda, namely reconciliation amid feuds among their supporters. The lawsuits at the Constitutional Court and the horizontal conflicts following the quick count results of the 2019 presidential election did not affect their agreement to join in a coalition structure. The ballot box serves as a metaphor for democracy, which ideally should be competitive but instead resulted in a coalition that is the antithesis of the democratic process itself. Interestingly, this issue seems to continue from the edition of July 1-7, 2019, which followed it with a cover that immediately encapsulates the conclusion of the events over the past two years titled the 2019 presidential election.



Image 12. Tempo Magazine, July 1-7, 2019 edition

The image of Jokowi riding a bicycle with Prabowo as his passenger is an iconography of the carvings/murals of Jokowi's figure, which are famous in airports across the nation. The cover illustration of the July 1-7, 2019 edition seems to serve as an epilogue to the 2019 presidential election saga. Prabowo's pose, depicted riding pillion on Jokowi's characteristic bicycle, signifies Prabowo's submission and discipline in accepting the offer to join a coalition with Jokowi's government. Noteworthy in this cover is the caption that functions as the anchorage of a sign. It reads, 'Let Bygones be Bygones: Discussions on the Jokowi-Prabowo coalition grow heated. Positions of ministers, ambassadors, the MPR leader, and presidential advisors are discussed as compensation. Some from camp O2 refuse.' This caption seems to contrast with what is depicted on the cover. Prabowo's figure, displaying a joyful smile while holding onto Jokowi's waist and waving his hand, indicates that the discussions about camp O2's inclusion in the coalition have concluded at the elite level, but not at the grassroots.

The image on the cover of the July 1-7, 2019 edition symbolizes the fragmentation of Prabowo's camp at the grassroots level regarding his decision to join Jokowi's coalition. The depiction of Jokowi riding a bicycle symbolizes strength and the direction set by the figure on the back seat of his bicycle. In other words, this photo is not just a modification of the iconography of statues or murals of Jokowi commonly found in airports and other public places, but it also carries the implications of Prabowo's compliance and Jokowi's accommodative politics towards him. The choice of red for the bicycle ridden by Jokowi signals the dominance of Jokowi's party, PDIP Perjuangan, as the main political vehicle in Indonesia after Prabowo joined the coalition.

This cover uses the bicycle as a metonymy that theoretically functions to associate and connect a sign as representative of the whole. Thus, a bicycle, originally politically neutral, becomes a politically charged symbol due to its association with Jokowi and the added red accent. The bicycle became both a vehicle and a symbol of the political apparatus that brought the two presidential candidates together in the national coalition campaign of 2019.

Overall, the Tempo magazine covers featuring Jokowi and Prabowo during the pre-campaign, election, and post-election periods of the presidential race have a saga-like or chronic narrative, akin to a battle between two binary factions in a fictional story (Greimas, 1987), all wrapped in satire. Interestingly, Tempo's effort to present the battle of the two presidential candidates for the 2019-2024 period was thwarted by the anticlimactic fact that Prabowo ultimately decided to join a coalition with Joko Widodo.

The semiotic method used in analyzing the covers of Tempo magazine during the three key phases of the 2019 presidential election successfully captured both the signs and the hidden meanings of each pair displayed. It appears that Jokowi's figure throughout these three key phases is portrayed as more composed and often given a more smug smile than Prabowo, except in the March 4-10, 2019 edition when the Tempo magazine cover showed both vying for the influence of the NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) voter base. This simultaneously affirms Prabowo's identity and his supporters' association with Islamic groups.

Furthermore, Tempo magazine covers tend to portray Prabowo with a more emotional and stressed expression during the three key phases of the 2019 presidential election. His figure, depicted joyfully waving from a bicycle ridden by Jokowi during the reconciliation episode, shows that in the end, he was not on the losing side. Simultaneously, in this final edition, Tempo also discusses how Prabowo appears to abandon his loyalists who hoped he would remain in the opposition. The contrast and Prabowo's beaming smile as he rides alongside Jokowi on the cover signal the main content of the discussion and the anticlimactic closure of the saga.

The word 'anticlimactic' is most fitting to summarize the series of political episodes in the 2019 Indonesian presidential election. Initially appearing in the post-election period, Tempo still positioned itself optimistically about the continuation of a balanced government system with Jokowi in power and Prabowo's camp as the opposition outside the government. However, what transpired was inevitably the absence of opposition in Joko Widodo's second administration.

An interesting aspect of Tempo's cover stories throughout the post-election period and Prabowo's integration into Joko Widodo's coalition is its neutral stance on this non-opposition scenario. This tendency is clearly evident in the last two episodes of the cover cartoons. Tempo adopts a 'wait and see' approach towards the new political climate in Indonesia.

Conclusion

This study aims to analyze the covers of Tempo Magazine leading up to, during, and after the 2019 presidential election. Using semiotic analysis, this research explores how the contestation of power among political actors in Indonesia unfolded before, during, and after the 2019 presidential election.

The findings of this study illustrate two points. *First*, the covers of Tempo Magazine reflect Tempo's reporting, which does not show bias towards any presidential candidate. Tempo positions itself as a watchdog or a check on the political behavior of both candidates. The reporting more so depicts the balance of power between the candidates, which led to sharp polarization within society, resulting in divided support.

Second, the covers of Tempo Magazine reflect a political contestation that did not produce opposition but instead a coalition. Is this a politics of peace or a politics of elite power-sharing? This always remains a point of criticism in the political context of Indonesia.

Using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach and the political rhetorical elements it contains, this work has added to the textual analysis of Tempo Magazine. It is suggested that future studies look at how the Tempo editorial team and artistic section's production and gatekeeping procedures determine the subjects, title selection, and visualization elements that define this magazine.

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