

COMMUNITY RADIO IN  
INDONESIA ED HOLLANDER  
A RE-INVENTION OF DEDY NUR HIDAYAT  
DEMOCRATIC COMMUNICATION LEEN D'HAENENS

Abstract

This paper discusses the ways in which efforts aimed at democratising the media system and empowering communities in Indonesia in three discursive periods (the 1998 "Revolution Movement," the "Reform Era" follow-up, and the 2002 Broadcasting Act up till the present time) have ebbed and flowed. The main result of the changing winds so far has been the liberalisation of the market, in line with global media trends. The Government has tried to frustrate the prospects of community media. Hence, the current development of community radio in the country remains stagnant, the main challenge being to create a more visible position in the media landscape, which in turn may bring about a more supportive stance in the government's policies. Our tour d'horizon of the state of affairs of community radio, its complementary status to the mainstream national media scene, and the assessment of current needs are based upon empirical evidence gathered in the Manado and Jogjakarta areas. Departing from the different dynamics of these two cases, weaknesses and critical success factors will be assessed, taking into account the different backgrounds of the regions, radio practitioners as well as their audiences in terms of religion, ethnicity, and life styles.

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In the wake of the *Reformasi* movement, after president Suharto left office in May 1998, the phenomenon of local radio in Indonesia expanded enormously. Estimates of the number of local radio stations range from one to about three thousand stations. This number includes public service and commercial as well as community radio stations. The most recent category is the community radio stations, almost all established after 1998 as a direct outcome of the *Reformasi* movement. One source estimates the number of organised community radio stations at 630; 400 in Java alone (Prakoso 2006).

In this article the development of community radio in Indonesia during three periods will be sketched: (1) the beginning of the *Reformasi* movement; (2) the “Reform Era” following president Suharto’s downfall in 1998, and (3) the period of establishing the Broadcasting Act (2002-2007) including provisions with regard to community media. For each period, the aspirations and frustrations experienced in the development of community radio are charted. Empirical descriptions of distinctive characteristics including the variety of community radio stations are provided through two case-studies, based upon field work carried out in the Manado (Sulawesi) and Yogyakarta (Java) areas between 2005 and 2007.

## The Reformasi Movement and the Local Media

Between 1989 and the economic crash of 1997, Indonesia was in the middle of, what could be called, a pre-transition phase, characterised by increasing pressure from society for democratic reforms and by conflicting interests among the ruling elites (Kitley 2003, 105). The economic crisis of 1997 and the fall of the Indonesian Rupiah turned this situation into a political crisis when, despite all this discontent, it became clear that president Suharto was determined to run for another term as president and was re-elected in March 1998. This led to an escalation of protests. On May 12, 13 and 15, a couple of “incidents” happened which shook the nation. On May 12, four students from Trisakti University were killed during a peaceful anti-Government demonstration, followed by three days of ferocious rioting in six major cities, including Jakarta. In the wake of these “incidents,” people took to the streets in masses and demanded reform measures as well as the resignation of president Suharto. On May 21 1998, Suharto was forced to resign.

Underground media, the Internet, alternative media, rumours and especially local radio stations were very prominently in the forefront of gathering and distributing information about what was going on in Indonesia, even before Suharto’s step down (Gazali 2004, 86-87). In the Indonesian context of that time, “underground media” referred to media produced and distributed by unknown groups of journalist, students and activists. They were mostly printed/copied media in the form of low-cost pamphlets and bulletins, containing mainly anti-Suharto and anti-Army articles and slogans. Downing refers to these small-scale media, in many different forms, that express an alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities and perspectives, as radical media (Downing 2000, v). Alternative media were considered media operated by known persons or groups that offered an alternative for government controlled local and national media. This category could include more or less independent local media but also international stations as Radio Netherland and Radio Australia.

These media were followed by the newspapers and the national commercial television stations. Between January and May 1998, local radio and newspapers

were the first to make the move from media controlled by the authorities to relatively independent media. Before 1998, more than the national media, the local media had to face various restrictions forcing them to exercise some form of self-censorship in order to survive. Issues raised between local media and local authorities usually concerned requests or warnings not to report or publish certain events, comments or opinions, on the ground that publication would disturb relations between various ethnic, religious or political groups in society. Control was not only exercised by national authorities but also at local and regional decision levels. Gazali (2004), in his research about the fall of Suharto as seen through the eyes of the editors of local radio stations and newspapers, reports on several agencies, varying from the local government, the provincial branch of the Ministry of Information, elements of the Indonesian Armed Forces at regional and district levels and police forces. Local media either complied with the rules or found a way out because closing down local outlets appeared to be much easier than Jakarta-based ones (Gazali 2004, 84). Based on these restrictive practices, the mantra “a free press, but with social responsibility” very much became “a free press, as long as it follows at all times what the Government wants” (Gazali 2004, 82).

In the vacuum of power that developed between January and May 1998, the need for local radio and newspapers providing factual news about events increased tremendously. Suddenly one started to realise that freedom of the press might become a new commodity, as witnessed by increases in circulation figures of local newspapers. Local radio stations gradually got involved into news gathering and transmission, although their “official” news bulletins were not allowed to inform the public about controversies or conflicts like demonstrations, rallies and discussion meetings. As of April and May 1998, local media responsables started to realise that they had no choice but to adopt a stance in support of the reform movement, although not without fierce discussions among editorial staff, station management, and owners (Gazali 2004, 88).

This newly regained freedom of the press was affirmed by Suharto’s successor, president Habibie, who started a deregulation policy cancelling the old printing and publishing licenses. About 1,200 new print, over 900 radio, and five new commercial television licenses were issued. At the same time Habibie announced the liquidation of the Department of Information, which under the New Order regime had censored all media in Indonesia (Vilé 2005, 67). Due to these shifts in policy, the Indonesian media landscape changed dramatically. For the first time since 1965, the country experienced again free elections, freedom of the press, and free political discussions in the media.

## Community Radio in the Reform Era

After the May Revolution of 1998 began an episode in the history of Indonesia which came to be known as the “Reform Era.” The overriding political ambition was to free the market and the media, and for that matter society as a whole, from state intervention. This ambition was backed up in 1999 by two important laws, the Local Governance Act (no. 22/1999) and the Revenues Allocation Act (no. 25/1999), both stressing the importance of decentralisation of political and administrative power and of economic resources. This same idea of decentralisation became crucial in new legislation with respect to the mass media.

As early as 1999, the House of Representatives passed a more liberal Press Law and the draft of a new Broadcasting Act was announced. This draft was expected to include provisions for public radio and television, both at national and local levels, and community radio and television, in order to create a counterpart for national and local commercial radio and television stations. Many recently established NGOs, advocacy groups, students, academics and new journalist unions got involved in the process of discussing and drafting the new broadcasting act (Gazali 2004, 105). As community radio and television were seen as essential tools in educating people throughout the archipelago about the new democratic rules of local government, these same groups promoted discussions and workshops in the provinces in order to organise support and input for the new broadcasting act (no. 32/2002). The latter was finally accepted by Parliament in November 2002 and went into force in December that year. This law stipulated the decentralisation of broadcasting and the establishment of an independent regulatory body, the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission. As with much of Indonesian legislation, operationalisation of crucial elements in the law was to be developed in subsequent Government regulations. It was in this climate of more decentralised and democratic media that as of 2002 many local commercial radio initiatives and grassroots community radio initiatives came off the ground throughout Indonesia. We present the case of Radio Wanuata as an example of such a locally originated community radio station, established in direct response to the needs and expectations from within the local community.

#### Case-study: Radio Wanuata FM

Radio Wanuata FM is a community radio station in the vicinity of the provincial capital Manado: after Makassar, the second city in North Sulawesi. The Manado area is in cultural, religious and political respect a fairly stable area with a predominantly Christian population. There are no racial or religious tensions, and maintenance of the status quo seems to be the main political objective.

Radio Wanuata FM was founded in 2003. Other community radio stations in the area are Radio Warna FM, established by the end of 2004 and one other station, Radio Jarkam FM, which started in the beginning of 2005. Other media in the surroundings are local commercial radio and television stations and newspapers. In December 2004 a Jaringan Radio Komunitas SelUt (Community Radio Network North Sulawesi) was established as a network for cooperation between community radio stations and to collectively discuss the ideology of the stations (i.e. pro-democracy, pro-transparency, pro-reform) and to discuss how to establish and maintain good relations with society in the surrounding villages.

If one compares older studies of community radio with more recent studies, it appears that over a period of 20 years, the main problems that community radio stations encounter have changed little over time. Both Hollander (1982, 116-120) as well as Dunaway (2002, 73-80) list finance (commercial- non commercial), organisation/staff (volunteers vs. professionals) and access (community participation/continuity) as the main dilemma's facing community radio stations. Against that background Radio Wanuata FM is a typical example of a grassroots, bottom-up community radio station struggling with the same kind of problems in terms of budget, continuity in human resources, training of volunteers, advertising revenues

(or lack thereof) and community participation, that community radio stations experience throughout the world. The station was founded out of mere dissatisfaction with the reporting by the other local (commercially run) media over events in the villages. Most reported events concerned disputes over land claims and villagers felt that these disputes were blown out of proportion by the commercial local media. A monthly bulletin did exist for the villages, but was deemed insufficient as a communication platform for the communities.

The community radio station was founded by inhabitants of the five villages (*desa's*) in the area. With support from the local government, churches and environmental groups, a radio transmitter was purchased and an organisational structure was set up. Participants from each of the villages were recruited and trained; originally five persons from each village participated but at the time of our interview (January 2005) the number was reduced to 3-4 persons from each village, totalling 15-20 persons. The station is funded thanks to financial contributions (i.e. transmitter and equipment) and *in natura*, e.g., building material for the studio. Together the five villages pay the electricity, water and telephone bills. The main industry in the area being gold mining and production of golden artefacts, the income and education levels are a little above average, compared to other villages in the area. At the time of the interview, the station was operating without a license. This is not uncommon for community radio stations in Indonesia. Because of the long interval between the establishment of the Broadcasting Act by the end of 2002 and the implementation of necessary additional government regulations concerning community media by the end of 2005, it has long been unclear and still is, which institutions have the authority to issue licenses (e.g., Department of Telecommunications, Department of Information, local or national KPI) if any.

The organisational structure comprises a governing board with five representatives of the villagers and two members from the local government and the church. This governing board supervises a coordinator, who supervises and coordinates the work of several production units, e.g., news, programs, creativity, etc.

All of the volunteers working in the production units are recruited from the five villages. The majority are young people (20-30) and farmers. The management team is a little older (30-50 years of age).

The horizontal programme schedule (same each day) covers six days a week (not on Sundays) with for five of the six days a special programme each day, such as education on Mondays, a children's programme on Wednesdays, a programme for farmers on Thursdays and content aimed at youths on Saturdays. The station broadcasts from 7.00 am till 9.00 pm in a prescribed range of six square kilometres. A daily programme is produced and presented by on average 3-4 persons and usually consists of a talk show, music (on request), local news, food and fitness tips, local sports, environmental information, information about arts, theatre and music. There is even a time slot for people to read poetry on the radio. Approximately 10-15 people are running the station in shifts.

The community of the inhabitants of the five villages has been described by our informants as a "close community" because of common employment (gold industry) and (inter)marriages. The audience of Radio Wanuata FM is, according to our informants, representative for the community as a whole, with a slight overrepresentation of young(er) people. The studio is accessible to all villagers

thanks to its location in the middle of the five villages. Regular phones and short messaging through cell phones are frequently used by the audience for requests and feedback.

The main problems faced by Radio Wanuata FM are continuity and staff training, technical failures and funding. Training of volunteers happens “on the job,” and with the current number of volunteers, there is hardly any “back-up.” In case of technical failure it is difficult to get repairs done in time because there is a scarcity in technical expertise in the area. The main problem remains funding, the operational budget being very tight. The station needs a budget of about 1.5 million Rp. (approx. € 100-150) per month or Rp. 30,000 per day. On a good day, the stations earns about Rp. 30,000 by playing paid-for request songs. Listeners fill in a request for a song and pay for the song to be broadcast. Because of the constant struggle for money, the station staff, volunteers and villagers have an ongoing and not yet settled discussion about the necessity to broadcast (local) advertisements. There is some doubt about the expected revenues. The general feeling at the time of the interview was that community radio and advertising do not go well together.

### Community Radio in an Indonesian Setting

At first glance, as we described earlier, Radio Wanuata FM looks like a typical example of a grassroots, bottom-up community radio station, with all sorts of daily running problems that community radio stations experience all over the world. However, this is the case when one looks only at the community radio station in its local context. In the broader context of Indonesia’s political aspirations to a more democratic and more decentralised society and media system, as proclaimed by the *Reformasi* movement, some differences emerge with e.g., the development of community radio and television in Western Europe. There, alternative and community media evolved out of a critique of existing social institutions and mass media, but always within the context of a firmly established democratic system (Hollander 1982). In Indonesia, however, at the grassroots level, community media themselves are to be instrumental in reshaping the democratic system and social institutions at the village and district levels. In reality, since the May Revolution of 1998, democracy in Indonesia is still very much “under construction” (Gazali 2004, 2).

We will now explore the functions ascribed to and fulfilled by community radio in Indonesia in relation to its development in the Western world. This section will then be followed by a description of a second case study, i.e. that of Radio Angkringan in Yogyakarta, Central Java, which presents an illustration of the political and cultural differences we have outlined.

An important function of community media lies first of all in the relevance of these media for people in their role as citizens, as inhabitants of a specific community, area, town or village. Other media may cater for people as sports fans or music lovers, but community media’s primary contribution is to what Dunkelmann describes as “*bürgerschaftliche Identitätsbildung*” (Dunkelmann 1975, 13), the formation of an identity as a member of the (local) civil society. The reference to civil society indicates the relationship with normative-democratic functions that all media are supposed to fulfil in a democratic society (i.e. information, opinion, critique, and control) but in the case of community media these functions become more prominent since ideally, democracy is built up from the local to the national

level. In a democracy, local communities and local government are the basic level of the democratic system and therefore the “breeding ground” of democracy (Jonscher 1991, 13). The task for community media therefore is to provide at the community level a platform for articulation and expression of opinions regarding issues relevant to the community; or to help create a local public sphere (Hollander 1982, 29-31). A second function of community media lies in the social and cultural relations within the community. Community media are supposed to strengthen people’s identification with and integration in the community; where the normative-democratic function is aimed at political socialisation, the social-cultural function is meant to strengthen social and cultural socialisation of the individual in the community (Jankowski 2002, 37-38). Over the years a lot of effort in the Western world has been put into this “community building” aspect of community media, from local newspapers to digital networks, mostly inspired by a fear of a diminishing “sense of community” in general (Jankowski 2002, 35-37).

Looking at the Indonesian context, the fear of “loss of community” does not seem to be the very first priority in the efforts to establish community radio. As a direct product of the *Reformasi* movement, community radio is more geared towards “democracy building” than to “community building.” This does not mean that there is no attention to local culture and local identity at all, but the emphasis is much more on reinventing local democracy, as will be demonstrated in the case of Radio Angkringan. This process of re-establishing democratic rules was instigated by the implementation of the Local Governance Act in 1999, which puts much emphasis on strong institutions at the district and village levels, which can assert political power, take decisions, and can be held accountable by the local community. This implies new rights and responsibilities for local government officials as well as for the local community. In other words, these are new rights and responsibilities which were non-existing before the fall of Suharto and about which the local community will have to be informed and educated. Here lies the important role for community radio stations at the local level. This was also the intention of the Broadcasting Act of 2002 stipulating that “community broadcasting organisations are broadcasting institutions ..., founded by certain communities as independent bodies, which are non-commercial, low frequency, restricted to certain areas, for the purpose of serving that community’s interest” (Gazali 2004, 156). This low frequency was reaffirmed in a subsequent (much criticised and therefore withdrawn) Government Regulation no. 51/2005, determining the maximum transmission radius at 2.5 square kilometres, *de facto* limiting the range of community radio stations’ reach to neighbourhood areas, villages and hamlets. The emphasis on the importance of community radio stations to operate at the local level, to inform and educate people about their new rights and responsibilities, in order to achieve transparency and accountability in local government, has remained at the forefront of the development of community radio in Indonesia. As an example of how community radio stations try to educate and involve members of the local community in discussions about elections, fund management by local government, transparency of administrative procedures etc., the case of Radio Angkringan will now be presented in some more depth.

### Case-study: Radio Angkringan

The idea of a medium for the community was here also very much a product of the *Reformasi* movement, which trickled down to the grassroots level after the so-called 1998 May Revolution. The political atmosphere which emerged during the early years of the post-Suharto era – among other things characterised by a weakening domination of the state over civil society – had created a fertile ground for a growing grassroots public awareness and for the crucial function of small-scale media. The latter would foster discussions on immediate issues and problems affecting the daily life of the villagers and would stimulate communication within the community as a whole. Such a newly acquired awareness was also inspired by changes in the media scene at the national level, coupled with a more relaxed control of local governments, and the spreading demands from civil society for political liberalisation during the early years of the post-Suharto era.

Within less than a year after the collapse of the Suharto regime, at the end of 1999, a group of relatively well educated young people in the village of Timbulharjo (Sewon District, Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta Special Province),<sup>1</sup> engaged in a series of evening discussions concerning issues such as the accountability of local administrators, the transparency of the management of development funds by village bureaucrats, and the lack of control by the community over the activities of local governments. One former participant in such discussions mentioned to us that people are very concerned with the fact that various income sources could easily be corrupted or misused by local government officials. Yet they do not know how the community as a whole could watch and control possible misuse of community funds. They were also in agreement that their community members would not have the courage needed for expressing their critical opinions on matters involving local government officials. Moreover, the group is divided into various politically oriented groups without any public forum to reach common understanding or agreement on matters involving the use and misuse of power by local government officials.

These discussions – which mostly took place in an *angkringan* (i.e. a sidewalk mobile footstall, selling traditional snacks and drinks) – led to an initiative to start a printed bulletin. Informants for this study agree that the idea for a bulletin was mainly motivated by an “anti-corruption” spirit among its initiators. One of them, then a university student, mentioned that in those days the idea of a community radio station was out of the question as the financial costs involved and the expertise required were prohibitive. The most important thing was to make available a medium for community members to voice their opinions, or to discuss and to form a common platform in dealing with various issues that may affect their common interests. Most of the volunteers for the bulletin were youngsters who had their own jobs or activities in or outside Timbulharjo. However, the most influential persons among the editorial staff members were students from various universities in the Yogyakarta area, who previously had participated in the local *Reformasi* movement or other student activist groups. The bulletin, *Angkringan: Bulletin Warga Timbulharjo* (Angkringan: Bulletin for the Timbulharjo Community) was first published in January 2000 in the hamlet of Dadapan (*Dukuh Dadapan*), where most of the initiators were living.



With a starting capital of Rp. 30,000, they managed to print some 75 copies of the bulletin to be distributed for free among the members of one hamlet within the Timbulharjo village (which includes 16 hamlets). The subsequent editions were sold either as monthly subscription (the subscription fee was Rp. 1,500, for the home delivery of four copies per month), or single purchase (Rp. 400 per copy). The bulletin was published every Friday to be distributed randomly to visitors to the Mosque for Friday's prayer. Later on, the number of copies was increased from several hundreds to 5,000, and the distribution was expanded to reach members from other hamlets in the village. To support the distribution of the bulletin, a distribution network was set up around 40 agents across 16 hamlets within Timbulharjo. Further on in its development, in March 2003, the bulletin also set up its "advertising and marketing" department (*Bagian Iklan dan Pemasaran*) and managed to raise additional funding by selling space to local businesses. Several samples of the bulletin display classified advertisements from a local traditional bakery, a home electronics service, a shoe repair service, a fashion outlet, etc. The cost of a classified ad is Rp. 250 per line. Funds from advertising merely cover the cost of snacks for volunteering staff.

**The Birth of Community Radio.** Within several weeks after the successful launch of the Angkringan bulletin, the editorial staff was challenged by the idea to establish a radio station. There were numerous factors and considerations behind the idea of "upgrading" Angkringan from a printed news bulletin into a community radio station. Firstly, the staff felt inspired and motivated by the growing movement in favour of the establishment of community radio stations in various other regions, characterising the drafting process of a new Broadcasting Act. Secondly, positive responses from subscribers and readers to the bulletin had a stimulating effect, coupled with encouragements from various village members (of whom some had expertise in electronics or access to financial resources).<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, there were also some technical considerations: they realised that printed media are less apt to deliver factual news as fast as radio does as it takes longer to print and distribute the news. In addition to that, specifically in a rural area where the literacy level remains low, printed material can only reach the literate segment of the community.

On 7 August 2000, the idea of a community radio finally was realised with the first broadcast of Radio Angkringan. The launch of this new community radio had been made possible by donations from villagers and by voluntary contributions from the staff. Donations came in the form of finances and new and used hardware. Other equipment, such as a tape recorder and cassette/CD player had been bought with money from the sales of the printed news bulletin. That day, 7 August 2000, the village of Timbulharjo became one among 13 villages in the Bantul regency district owning a community radio station. Like other community radio stations in the area, Radio Angkringan operates without a legal license from a government agency. Up till now, the radio is on air for six hours a day, from 6:00 pm till 12:00 pm. However, during the fasting month of Ramadhan broadcasts last till dawn.

Complementary to the radio station, the editorial staff decided to continue the printed bulletin. In the words of the chief editor of Radio Angkringan: "each form of media serves different functions for the community." He gave the example that during the 2003 election of a *Lurah* (head of the village), the radio provided broadcast time for each of the ten candidates who ran for office. Each of them had been

given equal air time to express their political agenda and their promises for the community. The printed news bulletin published the highlights of the candidates' political agendas and was distributed widely across the community. However, due to money and time constraints – especially after the start of Radio Angkringan – it was decided that the bulletin should be printed on less copies. It would continue to be published as *koran dinding*, to be displayed on public announcement boards in each of the 16 hamlets across the village of Timbulharjo. Nevertheless, on important events, it was decided to increase the number of copies. For instance, during the 2003 *Lurah* election, the bulletin was printed on 15,000 copies, with the full political agenda of each candidate.

As the case of Radio Angkringan clearly demonstrates, the need to produce radio programmes was not the main reason for its existence. The need for a community medium – whether a printed bulletin or a radio station – followed from the emerging need to communicate issues and problems directly affecting the community. This makes Radio Angkringan unlike some other community radio stations, especially campus community radio stations, which are generally more motivated from a hobby of radio making or out of the need to practice radio broadcasting.

**Organisational Structure.** There have been several changes in Radio Angkringan's organisational structure and/or personnel. Nevertheless, in general it has maintained a simple basic structure typical for a small community radio station. The organisation consists of one editor-in-chief, one secretary of the editorial board, one managing editor, two technicians, two news presenters and three reporters, totalling ten persons. The two initiators of the bulletin and the radio station are formally still included as honorary members of the staff

Some of the names that appear on the organisational chart of Radio Angkringan are also listed as editorial staff in the Angkringan Bulletin. In fact, each editorial staff member of Radio Angkringan automatically participates in the production of the news bulletin. In other words, the printed news bulletin and the radio station have become a single entity, under the same umbrella and operating with the same staff. As in the years when they started the news bulletin, nearly all personnel of Radio Angkringan are community members who have their own jobs and activities in or outside the village. One of them is a bank employee in Yogyakarta; the technicians are trainers in the centre for job training, the rest consists of construction worker, students, and semi-employed.

**Independence and Impartiality.** The organisational structure reflects the station's independence. There are no formal linkages with local administrative agencies or social institutions. One key informant, now serving as managing editor, stated that "Radio Angkringan is an independent public institution whose only responsibility is the community of Timbulharjo." The inclusion in the organisation of its initiators as honorary staff aims at securing the original vision and philosophy of Angkringan as an independent community medium. There are, however, some political clusters within the community of Timbulharjo, each affiliated with political parties or political groups outside the community. This could especially be observed during the 2004 General Election, when community members were torn between several political groupings. The same was true during local elections and during the election of the village chief (*lurah*) when several members of the

community ran for office. Nonetheless, so far Radio Angkringan has been successful in maintaining its neutral stance against lobbyists, local “spin doctors” and/or pressure from various political parties. When asked to give proof of the station’s neutrality, some crew members mentioned as indicator the absence of complaints from any group on supposed one-sidedness or partiality of Radio Angkringan’s newscasts, commentary programmes or talks shows. The neutrality of Radio Angkringan in crucial times has also been effectively maintained by positioning itself first and foremost as a platform informing and educating villagers about the complex regulations and procedures characterising the post-Suharto political elections and secondly, by providing equal broadcast time to each candidate in e.g., the election of the village chief. Other than that, some crew members of Angkringan also took the initiative to set up open public information meetings from one village to another within the Pawon sub-district, informing about various issues related to the procedures and mechanisms of the rather complex election system. The success of such initiatives made the Commission for Local Elections (*Komisi Pemilihan Umum Daerah*) decide to allocate money for financing the expansion of so-called “election literacy programmes,” to cover villages in six sub-districts (out of the 13 sub-districts, or *Kecamatan*, within the Bantul regency).

However, apart from such occasional funding, Radio Angkringan cannot rely on permanent or regular financial support from external sources. Its financial needs this far have been met in various ways. First come in the occasional donations from NGOs, local friends and sympathisers within the community. Donations usually come in the form of money or most often second hand hardware. During our interview it was mentioned that after the 2004 earthquake which hit the station hard, various community members came forward with aid, and a Dutchman provided a second-hand computer. It is also common practice that community members give donations in the form of snacks and cigarettes. Secondly, fundraising activities, such as selling t-shirts of Radio Angkringan to the community, also bring in some money. For example, last January 2007, some 150 t-shirts were made, bearing the name of Radio Angkringan, and sold to community members. Thirdly, in times of emergency, when hardware must be replaced immediately, *bantingan* is another solution by which each crew member gives a small donation and asks donations from friends or local businesses. Finally, contributions from the printed Angkringan news bulletin itself bring in additional funds for various activities. In fact, the financial management of the two media is under the same roof. However, the managing editor of Radio Angkringan mentioned that the survival and therefore the critical success factor of the radio station will depend on the sense of belonging of the radio towards the community. It is also his firm conviction that even without a license, the radio will survive because it is now part of the community.

**Radio Production and Supply.** In general, the supply of Radio Angkringan can be categorised into several content types which are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

*Entertainment* from Radio Angkringan consists in general of recorded music, in which listeners make a request to the presenter for a favourite song. The other category is live entertainment by local “artists” or entertainment groups. There is, for example, a regular live programme every Thursday with community member groups performing *mocopat*, traditional singing in Central Java. The groups do not only come from the village of Timbulharjo, but also from other areas outside the

transmission range of Radio Angkringan. In this case, Radio Angkringan gives access to members of the community who want to express themselves through arts and music.

Content in the category of *information and education* mostly consists of news bulletins on local issues and of reports about ongoing or upcoming events in the village, sub-districts, districts, or nearby areas. According to some reporters of the radio station, it is now also becoming quite common that members of the community invite Radio Angkringan to cover live wedding ceremonies of one of their friends and relatives (often in return for a modest amount of money or food). However, the news can also take the form of education, sometimes presented as joint production with local agencies related to agriculture and health, informing the community on various agricultural and health issues. Last February 2007, for instance, the radio and the local Centre of Community Health (*Pusat Kesehatan Masyarakat*) produced a series of “Question and Answer” programmes about do’s and don’ts when confronted with dengue fever.

The crew members of *Radio Angkringan* are in unanimous agreement that it is their duty to better inform all members of the community on various matters that involve general community interests; for instance, the use of election funds by the local election committee, the official fee for obtaining land certificates, details on concrete policy agendas of every candidate in the local election, etc. The radio station tries to collect and to broadcast news about such matters. On top of that, for important matters they also publish more detailed data and information on the printed Angkringan bulletin. For instance, in one of its 2003 editions, a detailed budget of the use of a Rp. 63 million fund (€ 6,300) for the village chief election is documented. It seems important to do so, because it is felt that the public too often is still unaware about its right to get access to public information. From relatively better educated community members, there are demands that *Radio Angkringan* should make public the financial reports from the village chief. Meanwhile, however, in trying to meet such demands, the radio crew developed a tense relationship with the village chief who refused to make the report available for the community. Key informants mentioned that the idea to make such a report publicly available was a new phenomenon for most of the community members. In the past, they would have perceived it as natural and acceptable that government officials kept such data out of the public domain. People still nowadays tend to feel that it is none of their business to question the practices of those in power as they are still unaware that times have changed and that they now have the right to question the practices of government officials.

During local election periods, the radio station aired content primarily aimed to supply community members with information about new procedures and regulations on the new and relatively complicated election system. The radio station also broadcasted information about candidates, their personal data, previous experience, and political programmes. The purpose of which, according to a key informant, was to give a frame of reference for those who needed to compare and evaluate each candidate, before making a decision. Secondly, since Radio Angkringan also published such information in the Angkringan Bulletin, community members could use the printed information as a document for later reference should the elected Lurah abandon his promises.

*Talkshows* (news analysis and commentary) are the core of Radio Angkringan's activities in which community members discuss topical issues or problems at local level. The shows are often broadcast live from *angkringan* or public meeting places. In some occasions, the talk shows are performed as political satire, full of indirect criticism toward local government officials. For some, the indirect criticism is not as sharp as expected. However, for some other members of the community, such satire is a completely new phenomenon, similar to so-called "social advertisements" aiming at awareness building among the community of the concrete consequences of their voting decision. They remind the public that candidates should be held accountable for their promises made during elections once in power.

In sum, Radio Angkringan offers information and education aimed at enlightening and empowering community members. As part of their "social responsibility," the editorial staff of Radio Angkringan regularly invites various community members to evaluate the radio's functioning and to propose ideas for content considered important to be aired. In one instance, they invited both formal and informal leaders in the community (e.g., all hamlet chiefs in Timbulharjo) to evaluate and to give suggestions for improvement. In addition to that, the radio station also regularly invites community members at large to propose ideas for radio content, although up till now most suggestions tend to be entertainment oriented.

## Community Radio and the Broadcasting Act, 2002-2007

The establishment of community radio stations in Indonesia as well as the draft and implementation of Broadcasting Act of 2002 have been the most palpable material and legal outcome of the *Reformasi* movement in the process of decentralisation of broadcasting. Since 1998, in the *de facto* legal vacuum, communities of villagers, farmers, fishermen, students and others have used the opportunity to create communication media for their own communities. These groups, with the help of NGOs, have organised themselves into networks such as the Indonesian Community Radio Network, the Community Radio Network for Democracy, the Association of Farmer Solidarity Radio Stations, the Fishermen's Voice Radio Network, the Forum of Campus Radio Stations and the Urban Poor Consortium/UPC Community Radio, in an effort to solidify their overall position. Prior to 2002, during the process of drafting the Broadcasting Act, many of these networks and groups were involved in discussions and local consultations (Gazali 2004, 95-110) in order to prepare solid proposals based on informed input from those involved in community radio endeavours. Never before so many professional and academic institutions, NGOs, politicians and intellectuals had been offered the opportunity to be actively involved in discussions about the future of broadcasting (d'Haenens, Gazali and Verelst 1999, 149). These efforts created up until December 2002 high expectations about the possibility to establish a more democratic, decentralised broadcasting system.

These same efforts, however, and the resulting Broadcasting Act of 2002 elicited huge criticism from the main national commercial broadcasting stations, organised in the Indonesian Association of Commercial Television Stations (ATVSI). From the very beginning this organisation contested the two central elements of the Broadcasting Act: decentralisation of broadcasting and the authority of the Indonesian

Broadcasting Commission (established in 2003) to issue licenses. They feel that the regulations concerning decentralisation would make it impossible for commercial stations to obtain national coverage, and thus would hinder their performance and position in an already ruinously competitive market. The law grants national coverage only to the former State, now public broadcaster TVRI. For commercial television to establish national coverage there is the obligation to set up cooperation with initiatives in the regions.

In 2004 the Constitutional Court ruled that the Broadcasting Act was in line with the Constitution and that the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission should sit together with the Government and come to an agreement on licensing. It also stipulated that additional, more specific regulations should be designed by one party only, i.e. the Government (interview with KPI member, September 30, 2006). This decision placed the Government back at the centre of control over broadcasting issues, even leading to the *de facto* resurrection of the Ministry of Communication and Information. On several occasions the KPI invited in vain the responsible Minister “to discuss together” relevant issues. Meanwhile, in 2006, all ten commercial television stations received Government confirmation stating that they would automatically get their national coverage license (interview with KPI member, September 30, 2006). As this practice is a breach of the 2002 Broadcasting Act, the KPI brought these matters to the Constitutional Court, requesting that it be given regulatory authority over the sector, without result so far. This development was described to us by one KPI member as the betrayal of the spirit of the 2002 Broadcasting Act by commercial television broadcasters and the Government, and as a negligence of the Parliament.

At present the Government *de facto* issues licenses, but depending on the ruling of the Constitutional Court, these regulations may or may not be valid. This stalemate between Government, national commercial broadcasters and the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission has seriously hindered further additional legislation in favour of community broadcasting. When for instance in November 2005 the Government issued Regulation No. 51 on community broadcasters, this regulation was immediately opposed by the members of parliament and the National Broadcasting Commission, since the Government claimed the right to issue licenses, although this right is by law determined by the state through the National Broadcasting Commission (Broadcasting Act No. 32/2002, article 33). Subsequently, the implementation of this Government Regulation was postponed (*Jakarta Post*, December 6, 2005).

## Re-invention of Democratic Communication?

The legal vacuum that persists since the implementation of the Broadcasting Act has both nurtured and frustrated the development of community radio in Indonesia. It has offered local communities the possibility to grab the opportunity and establish community radio stations throughout the archipelago, set up cooperation with other stations in community radio networks, and draw support from NGOs and political groups. Notwithstanding this legal vacuum, the community radio stations have established their positions regionally and locally and will continue to do so in the future. It might, however, be that the political fate of decentralisation of broadcasting and therefore of community radio stations will not be decided at the local and regional levels, but at the national political forum, in the ongoing discus-

sions between the commercial television industry, the Ministry of Communication and Information, and the National Broadcasting Commission (KPI).

At present, over five years since the Broadcasting Act was approved by the Indonesian parliament, its potential impact, once fully implemented, on the path toward a more democratic media landscape, remains doubtful. The Act could still be revised in favour of the industry. Shortly before the national elections of 2009, it seems that both national commercial television stations and the Government have found each other in an attempt to effectively frustrate the operations of the KPI and the spirit of the 2002 Broadcasting Act. Despite strong demands from the Indonesia Community of Press and Broadcast Media (MPPI), the Indonesia Local Television Association (ATVLI), backed by Parliament members, for immediate implementation of the 2002 Broadcasting Act, specifically the decentralisation of “national” commercial Free-to-Air TV stations (by no later than December 2007!), the current Government indecision clearly suggests a more favourable attitude towards the industry. A source at the Ministry of Communication and Information mentioned to us that a postponement of three years is highly likely, whereas a prominent member of ATVSI (Association of Indonesian Private Television stations, representing the interests of the industry) clarified to us that a five-year postponement will be asked for. As a result on the current indecision on the key issue of the Broadcasting Act, there is no progress whatsoever on the licensing of (community, local and regional) broadcasting initiatives as an alternative to the commercially run national and local broadcasting stations. By lifting its implementation over the 2009 general elections, the fate of the community radio stations will be in the hands of the then powers to be.

In retrospect, community radio in Indonesia started under more favourable conditions than was the case in for instance most Western European countries (Hollander 1982; Jankowski, Prehn and Stappers 1992). It was part of a nationwide movement for reform and decentralisation and its legal status was early on embedded in the new Broadcasting Act. Where in Western Europe, in strong and established democracies, community radio initiatives had to go a long way through the institutions to acquire a legal status, in Indonesia, the acquired legal status is threatened by the fact it is a society in transition, where democracy and democratic rules have to be re-established (Robinson and Vedi Hadiz 2004). This development has much in common with the media development in recent established democracies in Eastern Europe (Williams 2005, 98-114). Both developments demonstrate the dilemma of democratic media in societies in transition: to make a transition to a democratic society, democratic (community-based) media are essential, but because these societies are in transition, established economic and political powers can still form a threat to media supporting the re-invention of democratic communication.

## Notes:

1. The village of Timbulharjo is not isolated: it is more like a suburban area with easy access to the city center of Yogyakarta. It is located only some 20 kilometers from Yogyakarta. Accordingly, many of its members are commuters who work or study in the nearby city of Yogyakarta.
2. For instance, there were two volunteers from the village who are working as electronic engineering trainers at a Centre for Job Training (*Balai Latihan Kerja*). Both are still active members of Radio Angkringan.

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