

People's Media and Communication Rights in Indonesia and the Philippines ¹

The research on "*People's Media and Communication Rights in Indonesia and the Philippines*" was carried out in the Philippines and Indonesia between October 2003 to September 2004. This study attempts to investigate the emerging phenomena of people's media and communication rights in the Philippines and Indonesia. These two countries are selected as they form an important part of the ASEAN nations. Secondly, their varying degree of media freedom and political transformation in recent years provide for a dynamic comparative perspective. To begin with both countries share a great deal of similarities in their historical background as colonies of Western power, namely Spain and the United States of America in the case of the Philippines and the Netherlands in the case of Indonesia. And both countries are rich in cultural traditions as well as natural resources. The distinctive differences lie in their religion and language. The majority of the Philippine people are Catholic while Indonesia is a secular state with the largest Muslim population in the world. As for language, the Philippines chose English as the official language after liberation. Indonesia, on the contrary, chose to invent a new language, '*Bahasa Indonesia*', as a means to integrate the diverse ethnic groups and several hundred of their languages into one national language. All of these have significant bearing on the communication culture and the media in both countries. But let us first look at some theoretical underpinning on the notion of people's media and communication rights.

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People's media and communication rights

The term people's media or alternative media is generally used to distinguish between commercial mainstream media and people organized media which are mostly small, independent, non-commercial and non-profit. People's media in a more specific context may have embraced media activism, radicalism, underground or alternative media activities involving numerous innovative channels of communication, creative and subversive content which Downing termed '*radical media*' (2001). They are armed with a clear social and political agenda to communicate with their constituents and, to a large extent, to mobilize the masses or the public into action. Rodriguez (2004), however, cautioned that alternative media, also known as citizens' media, radical media, *medias libres*, participatory media, community media or grassroots media, should not be seen as the binary opposition of mainstream media. Since this would place alternative media into a narrow perspective and limits the potential of alternative media to the ability to resist the big media. Instead, she suggested in her *Fissures in the Mediascape* (2001) that the term *citizens' media* should be used to define the transformative processes of these media for which participants and communities are empowered.

"Citizens' media articulates the metamorphic transformation of alternative media participants (or community media, or alternative media) into active citizens. That is, citizens' media is a concept that accounts for the processes of empowerment, conscientization, and fragmentation of power that result when men, women, and youth gain access to and re-claim their own media. As they use media to re-constitute their own cultural codes to name the world in their own terms, citizens' media participants disrupt power relationships, exercise their own agency, and re-constitute their own lives, futures, and cultures."

(Rodriguez, 2004, p.18)

In contemporary socio-political context a large majority of people's media or what Rodriguez called citizens' media are connected to people and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), labour union, grassroots and middle class social and political movements on a wide range of issues. These include for example land rights, small scale production in agriculture and fishery or the right to livelihood, ecological movement fighting against deforestation and environmental destruction, urban poor, gender, child rights, cultural

and political rights and, not least, issues concerning globalization, WTO and Free Trade Agreement (FTA).²

The key to people's media is the struggle for the right to speak, to gain freedom of association, idea and expression, to resist and criticize, to oppose state terror, injustice and oppression, to be heard and understood by the public and by the '*established power*' at all levels that would lead up to physical and mental emancipation. These rights are basic communication rights enshrined in most national constitution and in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which set the broader framework on the right and freedom of expression, the right to access and impart opinion, information, knowledge, culture and the arts.

In 1995, the People's Communication Charter, proposed by communication and media academics and activists, expounded communication rights and freedom as its central tenant.³ Communication rights in modern society is seen as a key and basic human rights similar to education, health care, housing and employment for citizens.

"All people are entitled to access to the resources they need to communicate freely within and between their societies;

All people need to develop their own communication skills, channels, and institutions through which they can speak for themselves with dignity and respect, and tell their own stories;

Provisions for all aspects of free, independent and secure communication and culture and mechanisms for their implementation, must be strengthened."

(Preamble, People's Communication Charter)

The Charter goes beyond advocating the right and freedom of expression for the mass media. It criticized the mass media of '*disempowerment*' that is a serious violation of the human entitlement to dignity, equality and liberty. In essence, the Charter called for a shift of the concept of communication and media in which communication contribute to the '*empowerment*' of people and the improvement of the communication environment. This

² For more detailed analysis on the global alternative media movement see for example Downing's '*The Seattle IMC and the Socialist Anarchist Tradition*', paper from *OurMedia* conference 2001.

³ The group of organizations who proposed the People's Communication Charter were the World Association for Christian Communication, Centre for Communication and Human Rights (Netherlands), Third World Network (Malaysia), the Cultural Environment Movement (USA) and AMARC (Peru/Canada). It is intended as a first step towards a global movement on people's communication in order to shape the cultural environment.

means the people must take responsibility for themselves to create their own media and to shape the cultural environment according to their needs and interests (Hamelink, 1995).

Along this conceptual shift there are concrete praxis demonstrating how civil society, peasants and workers are creating their own media channels as an alternative means of communication and as a force to transform media structures. These are people's organizations, NGOs, social and movements working expressly on freedom of expression and the right to information pertained in a democratic polity. The aims of these media organizations, either set up by community groups or professionals, are to advocate freedom of speech for the marginalized people in the society, for his/her own community and most of all for the attainment of the basic communication rights. These people's media organizations are connected, in turn, in the form of a loose coalition or an alliance. Some might be organized into associations or networks with clearly defined goals and organization structures. This group of organizations could be seen as a distinctive category of people's media organizations. Their mission is to achieve a more democratic media culture and democratic media structure, locally and globally.

Hackett and Carroll (2004) looking at the examples of the US and UK media reform movements described people's media organization as critical social movements on media reform. In their view the programmes and campaigns of these networks and organizations are seen in terms of media democratization activism. Hackett (2000, 70-71) distinguished 4 major strands of praxis in his scheme of media democratization activism. These are;

1. *influencing content and practices of mainstream media – e.g., finding openings for oppositional voices, media monitoring, campaigns to change specific aspects of representations;*
2. *advocating for reform of government policy/regulation of media in order to change the very structure of media institutions – e.g., media reform coalitions;*
3. *building independent, democratic and participatory media – alternative media and support services to give voice to the marginalized, thereby opening new channels of communication independent of state and corporate controls;*
4. *changing the relationship between audiences and media, chiefly by empowering audiences to be more critical of hegemonic media – e.g., media education and culture jamming.*

This paper intends to look at media democratization activism in Indonesia and the Philippines between 1990s and early 2000. This period has been marked as the critical moment of socio-political and economic transformations in both countries. It was clear that the media played a key role during the recent political upheaval and its aftermath. The first part of the paper will provide an overview of communication and press freedom in Indonesia. Popular resistance and political events leading up to the '*May Tragedy*' in 1998 have forced President Soeharto to step down after 32 years in power. For the Philippines, the paper looks at the important role of the media; the press, internet and text messages or SMS through mobile phone, that mobilize the people to voice their sentiment against President Joseph Estrada and the Senate after the unjustified impeachment trial in 2000-2001. Several million Filipinos took to the street and rallied at EDSA to demonstrate the force of '*People Power*'. President Estrada was finally ousted in February 2001. The paper will also look at some examples of media organizations working towards the democratization of media culture and media structure in Indonesia and the Philippines.

Indonesia

The early years of the Indonesian press has been described as a '*political press*' in its close connection to the struggle for independence.⁴ Under the Dutch colonial rule, Tirta Adi Surjo started *Soenda Berita*, the first native newspapers in Malay language, on August 17, 1903 in the Dutch East Indies archipelago.⁵ But *Soenda Berita* was short lived. The *Medan Prijaji* followed in the period of the *pergerakan*, the anti-colonial popular movement in Java. In the early 20th century journalism and popular movement were interdependent as Shiraishi (1990) described it, "journalism is *pergerakan* and *pergerakan* is journalism, where *pergerakan* leaders are born out of journalists and journalists out of *pergerakan* leaders" (quoted in Dhakidae, 1991, p. 11). The Dutch authority reportedly pinpointed *Medan Prijaji* as '*energetic, gifted, cunning and more poisonous*' than the other papers because the governments and officials were vehemently attacked and government regulations ridiculed.

⁴ Dutch East Indies company and the Dutch government, subsequently, colonised the archipelago for 346 years, between 1596-1942, and returned after the end of World War II to re-colonise the country in 1945. The Indonesian Nationalist Movement fought another 4 years of bloody Revolution before the country was finally liberated.

⁵ This is the fourth generation newspapers but recognized as the first truly indigenous newspaper published and edited by a native. Prior to this the first generation newspapers was Dutch papers. The second generation papers were Dutch but published in Malay language with some help from local journalists. The third generation papers were published by Indonesian Chinese in Chinese or Malay language or a mixture of Chinese, Malay and Dutch (Dhakidae, 1991, p.35).

Moreover, *Medan Prijaji* captivated and influenced its readers to think of improving themselves. By way of publishing news on injustice and discrimination in the language of the *pergerakan* the paper has appropriated and translated the political discourse into political actions such as gatherings and trade unions strikes. The consciousness raising of the press was to further Indonesia's political end in organizing into pan-Islamism and pan-Communism (Dhakidae, 1991, pp.36-37).

In the decades that followed, the press was very much a part of the Nationalist Movement in the 1920s-1940s. The prominent characteristics of these newspapers were a commitment to the nation's independence and a biased against any political neutrality. The press must choose either to side with the colonialist, *sana*, or to side with the nationalist, *sini*, in the struggle, *perjuangan*, to free the nation.⁶ In the 1950s newspapers readership expanded so did the number of papers. During this period of Sukarno's leadership and nation building the political role of the press was more entrenched when they come under the patronage of the political parties for instance *Harian Rakyat* under the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), *Pedoman* under the Indonesian Socialist Party (PSI), *Sulu Indonesia* under the Indonesian National Party (PNI), *Abadi* under Masjumi Party (modern Muslim party) and *Duta Masyarakat* under Nahdlatul Ulama (NU).

Dhakidae (1991) argued that it was the '*political press*' before and during the first two decades of Indonesia's independence that constructed a political public and, hence, these readers become active citizens and voters of the new nation. He elaborated on how the coup in 1965 and General Soeharto's took over of power rid itself of the '*political press*' and turned it into an industry of commercial press.⁷ In a sense, the press has been '*neutralized*' or '*depoliticized*' and institutionalized into the modernization scheme of Soeharto's '*New Order*'. The survivor of the political putsch were the Army papers, *Angkatan Bersenjata* and *Berita Yudha*, and two Christian papers, *Kompas* (Catholic Party) and *Sinar Harapan* (Protestant Party), which grew unchallenged well into the 1980s. In the process, the new regime entrusted the press into the control of a few business groups who were either supportive of the regime or were its cronies. With the advent of new printing technologies and the influx of

⁶ Historically, *perjuangan* or *perjuangan* referred to the political movement for independence and resistance against the Dutch. In contemporary context, *perjuangan* means idealism or struggle for an ideal. A newspaper which lives up to its idealism is called a *perjuangan* paper (Dhakidae, 1991, p.42).

⁷ After the coup in 1965 the press shifted to the right, some published by the Army and some supported by the Army while the nationalist and leftist press were later wiped out all together (Dhakidae, 1991, pp.42-56).

advertising revenue the press rose into a vibrant industry in the 1970s-1980s along with the rise of capitalism in Indonesia despite spurts of news print crisis and oil crisis.

In summary, the decline of the political press ushered in business concentration of the national press industry and centralization to Java. The state, in addition, imposed strict control on publishing license, *Surat Ijin Usaha Penerbitan Pers* (SIUPP) or Press Publication Enterprise Permit (Ministry of Information regulation no. 1, 1984), coupled with censorship and total ban of dissident voices. The press in the 'New Order' era was tongue tied and open resistance was scant. It was no longer a market place of political and pluralistic ideas. Journalists who dared to criticize the government must use cultural traditions such as folk tales and myths or use metaphoric language in their writing (Sudiby, interview 12 July 2004). But the majority of the press was silent for the sake of their economic interest. Open resistance towards the 'New Order' only began when the press was economically marginalized in the 1990s (Aditjondro 1999).

Press resistance in Soeharto's 'New Order'

The watershed of journalists' resistance in the mainstream media occurred after the ban of *Tempo*, *DeTik* and *Editor* magazines in July 1994. This was due to their report on the alleged corruption of the buying of 39 warships from former East Germany, a project under B.J. Habibie, Minister of Technology and Research. The report was an exposé of the unusual amount of budget earmarked for repairing the ships. It would take 640 million US dollars to repair these second hand ships which worth 12.7 million US dollars. There was an up-roar when Information Minister Harmoko banned the three magazines (AJI, 1994 and Human Rights Watch, 1994).⁸

The resistance took the form of an underground press and the organizing of a new journalist union—*Aliansi Jurnalis Independen* (AJI) or the *Alliance of Independent Journalist*.⁹ The same group of journalists also organized *Institut Studi Arus Informasi* (ISAI) or the *Institute of the Studies of Free Flow of Information*. Those who joined AJI were blacklisted and some were forced to leave their jobs. This was the juncture for which numerous

⁸ An insightful analysis on the ban of *Tempo*, *Detik* and *Editor* by Goenawan Mohamad was that the government saw the exposé by these magazines as a conspiracy against Habibie whereby Benny Murdani, ABRI Commander, the power contender of Habibie was behind the incident.

⁹ AJI has 500 members as opposed to the Indonesian Journalists Association or PWI, the government support press organization, which has about 3,000 members. PWI did not join AJI in the protest against the ban of the 3 magazines.

underground publications were produced to expose corruption and criticize the misconduct of Soeharto and his government. *Independen (Independent)*, later became *Suara Independen (Voice of Independence)*, *Xpos (Expose)* and the internet based *AJI News*, *Siar (Broadcast)*, *Mamberamo*, *TNI Watch (Army Watch)*, for example, were effective means of spreading critical news about the regime at home and abroad (Santoso, interview, 4 May 2004 and Stanley, interview, 12 May 2004). The internet, in its early stage in Indonesia, played a key role in the underground news group. News and articles from *Suara Independen*, for instance, were up-loaded to internet servers in Europe and the US and distributed to readers globally (Tedjabayu, interview, 12 June 2004). 'Apakabar', in particular, moderated by John A. MacDougall, was the largest newsgroup, reaching 250,000 readers in 96 countries, for Indonesians and students studying abroad. It provided news and forum of opinion in Indonesian language. In addition, many Indonesian non-governmental organizations and journalists joined in as active posters of messages and articles.¹⁰

AJI and ISAI spear-headed the campaign on press freedom as well as on human rights, the environment, gender and democratic reform in coalition with a wide range of non-governmental organizations. In addition, international organizations joined the campaign to exert pressure on the Indonesian government.¹¹ It was the beginning of a series of demonstrations voicing popular dissent throughout the country. Student protest was a regular phenomenon in politically active campus like Gadjadara University (UGM) in Yogyakarta, University of Indonesia (UI) in Jakarta, Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB) in Bandung and Agricultural Institute in Bogor. Some artists and theatre groups joined the press resistance as well as exhibited works critical of the regime. At the same time, *Satu Merah Pangung* broke the silence by staging the play *Marsinah : A Song from the Underworld* in 1994 to protest against the murder of Marsinah, a woman union leader in East Java. The play was performed in 11 cities around the country as well as 15 cities outside Indonesia.¹²

¹⁰ News and postings from 'Apakabar' were often reproduced in print and distributed widely beyond the middle class readers. 'Apakabar' (1990-2002) is now a database resource for public use and can be accessed at <http://www.indopubs.com>

¹¹ Some of these international organizations include press organizations such as the *International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)*, *Article XIX*, *International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX)*, *Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)*, *Freedom Forum* and the *International Press Institute (IPI)*.

¹² Marsinah, with her friends, were negotiating for a wage increase. She was murdered and her body found in the field 200 kilometres away from her home. Marsinah's murder became a rallying point for civil society and 27 non-governmental organizations on human rights, workers' union and student organizations formed a coalition to

The chain of event was exacerbated by the attack of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) headquarter in Jakarta in July 1996 (Lukas Luwarso, 1997). It generated more discontent amongst the political elites, intellectuals, students and civil society organizations. When the financial crisis erupted in 1997 the economic downturn became the last threshold of popular dissent. The gasoline price rise in early May and the killing of 4 students at Trisakti University in Jakarta on 12 May 1998 ignited the riots and the fall of Soeharto on 21 May 1998 after 32 years rule.¹³

Reformasi and people's media

'Reformasi' has ushered in democracy and a giddy sense of freedom which, essentially, transformed the mediascape in Indonesia. The new found press freedom, the right to information and the right and freedom of expression took many forms. First and foremost was the legal reform of the press law and broadcasting law. Civil society organizations formed a media coalition and were able to campaign for a new Press Law in 1999 (Law no. 40/1999) and Broadcasting Law in 2002. Since the new Press Law lifted the license control on newspapers and magazines the press no longer need a publishing license. The Ministry of Information was, thereby, abolished.¹⁴ Thus, the Press Law has enabled the mainstream press to mushroom.

On the other hand, the new Broadcasting Law has opened up the industry for a wide range of commercial radio and television stations. There are now 11 national commercial free-to-air television stations, including a 24-hour news station – Metro TV, and a range of cable services. In cities around the country commercial radio is booming. But the most radical change in the broadcasting mediascape came with the institution of a new category of radio, low-powered community radio, in the Broadcasting Law (Article 21-24). In less than 2 years, 400 community radio stations are on air and new stations continue to spread unabated (Tri Widjanarko, interview 4 June 2004). The Indonesian Broadcasting Commission

monitor the case. For more detail on Marsinah and the workers' movement see Akiko Kodama's "*The Participation of Women Workers in the Indonesian Labor Opposition Movement in the 1990s*", *Exploration in Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol.3, Fall 1999 (on-line version) and "*Labor rights and the Marsinah case*" in *The Limits of Openness*, Human Rights Watch, 1994.

¹³ For an overview of the restrictions on student political activity see, for example, chapter iii *The Soeharto legacy on campus*, chapter viii *The ban on student political activity and expression* in *Academic Freedom in Indonesia : Dismantling Soeharto-Era Barriers*, Human Rights Watch, 1998.

¹⁴ The Ministry of Information was closed down during the Habibie government. But it was re-instituted during Megawati's presidency (2002-2004). It is now the Ministry of Information and Communication.

(KPI) established in early 2004 has not been able to regulate all 2,500 radio stations; state, commercial and community radio, estimated to be in operation (Bimo Nugroho, interview, 12 July 2004).

Community Radio

Community groups, people's based organizations and individuals in villages in Java, Sumatra, Lombok, for instance, have been extremely eager to seize the media forum to participate in the decentralization process in the aftermath of the May Tragedy in 1998. Non-governmental organization such as COMBINE was formed with a central strategy to lobby for legal provision of community communication network and to promote autonomous communities and local good governance through community-based information and broadcasting network (Imam Prakoso, interview 4 June 2004).

For local activists community media particularly radio is significant and relevant both politically and culturally. This section looks at three example of community media and the way in which these media open new channels of independent and participatory communication for rural and urban citizens in Yogyakarta and Bandung. *Angkringan Radio* in Timbulharjo village, Bantul district on the outskirts of Yogyakarta, set up in 2000 by a group of young activists in the village, was able to monitor the performance of the newly elected village head, *Lurah*, by broadcasting the village meeting live to its audience. It was able to report on Timbulharjo village council's rejection of the annual and financial report of the village head. Together with the news report of *Angkringan Newsletter* the community media were able to expose the corruption of local land title registration office (Ahmad Nasir, interview 29 May 2004).¹⁵ In Timbulharjo, community media become the source of check and balance of local politics and monitoring of local administrative officers. These

¹⁵ Ahmad Nasir, a 28-year old graduate in Political Sciences from Gadjadara University, organized his friends to set up both the newsletter and the radio station in 2000. His personal experiences in the student movement, and as editorial staff of *Balaksumur*, the student weekly magazine, and not least, as a victim of distorted media report have inspired him to empower villagers through information and communication. *Angkringan Radio and Newsletter* received the ISAI Award in 2001.

Angkringan means a small food and drink stall, the popular road side café, for the community. It is an open forum where information exchange and communication take place. People can enter and leave, and talk freely. In addition, *Angkringan* is part of the community for which everyone feels a sense of belonging in this horizontal space where people can converse and connect. *Angkringan* works independently with support from subscribers and villagers who volunteer as crew and editorial members. *Angkringan* is also affiliated with COMBINE and a member of Yogyakarta Federation of Community Radio. *Angkringan* broadcasts on 93.6 FM between 7-12 pm. It has two transmitters, a 30-watt for the station and a 15-watt for outside broadcast.

unprecedented role of the media at the village level has obviously empowered the community and wipe away the traditional silence and fear.

In Bandung, *Radio Cibangkong* began in 2000 as a medium of mobilization and struggled against corporate encroachment. Before the huge shopping center project next to Cibangkong was built 1,800 households were evicted from their home. The construction created noise and air pollution in the area and debris were dumped on the ground and the canal by the village. Despite the threat of the powerful corporate and its thugs the villagers decided to fight back to defend their neighbourhood and their way of life. *Radio Cibangkong* was able to rally villagers and raise their consciousness to act for a just cause. It also monitored the activities of the shopping mall, represented the community in their negotiation with the owner of the mall and kept the community informed of new development. It became clear that “*solidarity of citizen*” was possible with community radio working as the citizen forum (Adi Rumansyah, interview, 24 August 2004). Another successful activity of *Radio Cibangkong* was ‘*peace building*’ between youth groups of Cibangkong and its neighbouring village (Gani Rachman, interview, 24 August 2004). During regular schedule *Radio Cibangkong* broadcast education and community development programmes as well as music.¹⁶

Balai Budaya Minomartani community radio or *Encounter Radio* in Sleman, Kaliurang, Yogyakarta is differed from *Angkringan* and *Radio Cibangkong*. The station set out with an objective to promote culture and community identity. Surowo Haryono, station manager and a professional audio-video producer, pointed out that the emphasis of *Encounter Radio* is on music and cultural programmes.¹⁷ Villagers in the community of 4,000 participate as audience, producers, programme hosts, djs and technicians (Interview, 4 June 2004). *Encounter Radio* broadcast Javanese music, *Campusari* and cultural performances by local artists, student and youth groups from the cultural centre next to the station (Surowo Haryono, 2003). The language of broadcast of *Encounter Radio* is mainly Javanese with some

¹⁶ *Radio Cibangkong* is broadcasting on 107.8 FM using a 35-watt transmitter covering a 6 km. radius. It has a 15-watt mobile transmitter. *Radio Cibangkong* is on air 6 hour a day, between 4-10 pm. The station is able to raise some fund from audience who send in their song request by charging 1,000 Rp for 3 cards of request. One card can request one song. *Radio Cibangkong's* slogan is “*Happy to Join, Happy to Listen*”.

¹⁷ *Encounter Radio* broadcast on 107.9 FM between 6-12 pm. It has a 30-watt transmitter with a 5 km. radius. The station was shut down for 3 months in 2002 because it was seized by the police. However, when the police wanted to take all the equipment the station resisted saying it is a community station and the equipment is public property. Finally, the police left without taking the equipment (Henschke, 2002).

Indonesian. This localization of language enable a number of woman villager to host the programme and speak at ease. In addition, members of the village, both Muslim (who formed the majority) and Catholic (who are the minority but operate the station), join in to exchange their ideas, religious and cultural traditions. *Encounter Radio* is an example of empowerment and socio-cultural integration for which religious, ethnicity and gender formed the basis of the cultural strength and diversity. These voices are no longer voiceless but found their own forum of expressions in the community.

As these examples showed community radio, small low-powered, 20-30 watt, local-built FM station, has been the alternative medium that is most accessible by far. They empower as well as voice the concern of the community. And since the majority of programmes are expressly designed with a participatory perspective in mind it is, therefore, vibrant and gaining much popularity in both urban and rural areas. Nonetheless, there are two major problems shared by most community radio stations and the *Jaringan Radio Komunitas* and the *Community Radio Alliance*. The first one involved the question of survival on the day-to-day operation. Most community radio face problem of sustainability. Although they are supported by their community in the form of organizer, contributor of ideas, loaning of equipments, producer of programmes and active audience, regular and sufficient funding of station remains a problem. Some stations devised methods of support based on a system of subscriber and fund raising activity. The second problem is a legal problem. Community radio is constantly threatened by the state and broadcasting industry for '*illegal broadcasting*'. Despite the Broadcasting Law (2002) and its stipulation on a new community broadcasting category the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI) has yet to resolve the license problem.¹⁸

¹⁸ The same problem threatened community radio in Thailand since 2002. In this case, the Public Relations Department (PRD which functioned as the Ministry of Information) under the Thaksin's government planned to incorporate all community radio under the PRD instead of giving these stations independent license. In addition, the PRD proposed to expand the number of station to 400 to cover the nation-wide electoral constituency.

For more detail on the struggle of community radio or low-power radio elsewhere see, for example, *Seizing the Airwaves : A Free Radio Handbook* (1998), *Microradio and Democracy : (Low) Power to the People* (1999) and *Making Waves* (2001).

Radio News Network

In the past, independent broadcast news production was strictly prohibited. It is confined to state radio and television; RRI and TVRI, for political control. After the fall of Soeharto the Ministry of Information issued a decree to liberalize the production of news on commercial radio and television. This is a great leap for the broadcasting industry and the Indonesian people in terms of access to news and information (Jurriens, 2002).

With this new opportunity UNESCO launched a project on local radio networking with 25 local commercial radio in 1999. The aim was to produce local news report and to monitor the polling of the general election at the local level. Young recruits and station staff undergone journalism training in order to produce radio news report (Arya Gunawan, interview 21 September 2004). Apparently, radio as an oral medium is seen as a crucial instrument for political and administrative decentralization and people's participation.

Around the same time, ISAI started its Radio News Programme in April 1999. Short radio news items were produced on digital MP3 format and sent to 14 member stations in major cities by internet. *Radio News Agency 68H* produced news as well as organized journalism courses for correspondents of its member stations. This is intended to build a network of two-way communication so that news report from Sumatra, Sulawesi, Papua, for instance, can be heard on the network. But due to the inefficiency and limitation of the internet service to download the audio files in the region *Radio News Agency 68H* decided to shift to radio broadcasting (Santoso, 2002). In 2000, *68H Radio* was broadcasting on the AM band at 603 KHz from Jakarta. For the first time news broadcast from an independent news network was on air for the national audience through satellite connection. In 2002 *68H Radio* acquired a new station, 89.35 FM, formerly a sports station, to serve the urban, middle class audience. The network continued to expand, from 60 to 260 stations in 2003 and is expected to reach 400 in 2004. *68H Radio* has 80 journalists in Jakarta and 60 correspondents around the country (Santoso, interview, 4 May 2004).

The main attractions of *68H Radio* are news, news magazine and interactive talk programmes. These include Morning Bulletin (6:00-6:30) and Afternoon Bulletin (16:00-16:30), Breakfast Programme (6:30-9:00) and Afternoon Programme (16:30-18:30), Breaking News (5-min news break at the top of the hour), Interactive Dialogue (09:00-09:30) presenting issues on legal reform, human rights, public health, regional autonomy, environment,

economic and religious tolerance. With its nation wide network the station was able to provide special programme to report and monitor the 2004 general election and presidential elections.

68H Radio began as a non-profit entity. It received support from the Asia Foundation, Media Development Loan Fund (MDLF), the Dutch Embassy and CAF. But to bring in addition fund *68H Radio* also produced programmes for sponsors such as UNHCR, UNDP, the Health Department and a number of non-governmental organizations. However, *68H Radio* is expected to become a commercial station by the end of 2004. Santoso, the director of *68H Radio*, reasoned that funding agency might not be able to support the station in the long run. Hence, it must seek its own sources of income. The solution for *68H Radio* is to go to the market. This is to bring in advertising revenue as the major means of financial support (Santoso, 2002). With this change, from an alternative radio to a commercial station, it remains to be seen how *68H Radio* strive to keep its ideal, '*Independen, Bisa Dipercaya*' or '*independent and trustworthy*', amidst fierce competition in the radio industry.

In the era of '*reformasi*' alternative news and media networking is seen as a significant empowering instrument for democracy by both the Indonesian civil society and international non-governmental organization. Besides *68H Radio* there is *Internews Indonesia*, supported by Internews Network, Inc., a non-profit organization from the US. Elsewhere in Eastern Europe, *Internews Indonesia* focuses on freedom of the press and newspapers. But in Indonesia it found radio an effective means of communication for the Indonesian people. *Internews Indonesia* distributes its news to 50 radio partners who subscribe to the service. In addition to news *Internews Indonesia* has other activities and programmes. These include training service, a television project, media law programme and technical equipment support to local radio stations (Jurriens, 2002). During the early phase of '*reformasi*' *Internews Indonesia* took an active role in the legal lobby for press freedom along side the Indonesian non-governmental organization alliance on media reform.

Neighbourhood Internet Network

Another interesting area of alternative media in Indonesia lies in the informatics and telecommunication technologies. Internet users in Indonesia have increased tremendously since 1998 and these are mostly users in the low-cost internet café (charging 3,000-4,000

Rp/hr or 0.5 US \$). The new '*cyber public sphere*' initiated during the underground press resistance in 1994-1998 has significantly demonstrated the potential and socio-political relevance of the internet. Unfortunately, computer is expensive for the majority of Indonesians and telecommunication infrastructures do not provide universal nor affordable access for users. Faced with these problems, Onno Purbo, Indonesian leading expert on Internet technologies and education, proposed the idea of neighbourhood internet network or community-based network using wireless internet technology. Basically the neighbourhood internet network employs the same technology as the community tele-center and the internet café. The difference is on the area it served and its low-cost homemade technology compared to commercial service. The neighbourhood internet network, with the extension of the LAN cables, could serve the surrounding neighbourhood instead of putting all connecting computers in one room. It operates as a low-cost broadband campus Wide Area Network based on Ethernet LAN technology.¹⁹ Since the '*neighbourhood internet network's*' main objective is to create a consciousness on communication right through the process of self-learning technology and networking it is believed that this would initiate a broad bottom-up internet infrastructure much needed for education and the future of a knowledge-based society (Interview, 10 June 2004).

There are experiments on the '*neighbourhood internet network*' in Bogor, Bandung and Yogyakarta, for instance. They arise from the lack of internet infrastructure provided by the government and the big telecommunication operators to citizens in outer urban or suburb areas of big cities. Putting theory into practice, the example of BogorNet showed that it was able to set up a couple of campus Wide Area networks or 24-hour wireless internet networks for small cluster of 10-15 houses in a 0.5-1.0 km area in Bogor. Hence, wireless internet which is originally designed for indoor connection has been transformed for outdoor networking with the aid of small, low-powered radio station. The subscription fee is approximately 300,000 Rp/month (US \$35-40) plus a start up cost of 400,00 Rp. (US \$ 50) (Michael Sunggiardi, 29 June 2004).

¹⁹ The detailed technology can be downloaded from <http://sandbox.bellanet.org/~onno/>. Those who need advice & technical support can join and ask in English in wifi4d@dggroups.org. The WiFi technology uses 2.4GHz or 5.8GHz frequency presented un-regulated internationally.

The Philippines

The Spanish government first published *Del Superior Gobierno* in 1811 containing dispatches from Calcutta, London, Spain, Boston. The purpose was to keep the inhabitants of the Philippines loyal to King Ferdinand VII and to report on the victory of the Spanish over French army. The first native newspaper, however, was *El Ilocano* published in 1892 in Ilocos province.²⁰ Prior to *El Ilocano* young and well-to-do Filipino exiles in Barcelona published the fortnightly *La Solidaridad* in 1889. They were part of the Propaganda Movement (1880-1895) struggling for political and social reform in the colony. Through newspapers, novels and other writings they publicized their liberal ideas and vision for an independent Philippine (see for example Schumacher, 1996, 2002 and Ables, 2003). *La Solidaridad*, whose well-known editors – Graciano Lopez Jaena and Marcelo H. del Pilar, with famous columnist like Dr. Jose Rizal, played a crucial role in creating a consciousness which led to the Revolution in 1896 against Spanish rule. Equally important were Jose Rizal's novels, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, which succeeded in awakening not only the 'illustrados' or the educated class but the Filipinos masses.²¹

This fighting tradition of the press during the Propaganda Movement and during the Revolution became an integral part of the Philippines nationalist movement in the 19th century. It was acknowledged that those were the 'Philippine Revolutionary Journalism'. Valenzuela's (1933) view was that these revolutionary papers were passionate, the language was exultant and emphatic and the pages were aflame with compelling emotions. *La Solidaridad*, for instance, called for Filipino representation in the Spanish Cortes (parliament), equal rights with the Spanish citizens, assimilation and education. From the start the Propagandist asserted the idea of freedom of speech, of the press and of assembly, and social and political freedom (Ables, 2003).

Inspired by Rizal and his writings, the *Katipunan Revolutionary Movement* – *Kataastaasan Kagalanggalang Katipunan*, KKK, or Most High and Sacred Society, headed

²⁰ It was the next generation of newspapers which was considered revolutionary. These were pro-independent and openly critical of the Spanish government who colonized the Philippines for 333 years (between 1565-1898). These include, for example, *La Libertad* (1898), *La Independencia* (1898) who followed the famous *La Solidaridad* in pursuit of freedom of speech and liberation from colonial rule.

²¹ *Noli Me Tangere*, published in Germany in 1886, exposed the friars who were power corrupt and oppressive. It described how Ibarra's family suffered under the abuse of the local friars. This was the first of his sequel which became the charter of nationalism for Filipinos. It called for self confidence and equality with the Spaniards. In his second book, *El Filibusterismo*, published in Belgium in 1891, Rizal showed how the main character, Simoun, was taking the course of revolution. But Simoun failed in his violent act and committed suicide (Schumacher, 1996).

by Andres Bonifacio, organized the Filipino plebeian into a secret society in Manila and 8 provinces in central Luzon. It was meant to unite the archipelago into one compact, vigorous, and homogenous body. They published their own paper, *Kalayaan* or Freedom and Liberty, to mobilize new members for the movement. But only the first issue, 2,000 copies, was distributed in March 1896. When the secret organization was found out the *Katipunan* was forced to take up arms and started an up-rising against the Spanish army and the *Guardia Civil* (the police) on 30 August 1896 (Cristobal, 1997).²² At the time, there were 16 'nationalist' newspapers supporting the Revolution for an independent Philippines.

The *Katipunan* and the Revolution succeeded on 12 June 1898 and a revolutionary government was established. But the Revolution was short-lived and the Philippines fell under American colonial rule in 1902. During the early period of American rule the pro-independence newspapers were closed down and journalists arrested and tortured. It was during the American colonization that the press gradually turned from a political press in the 1910s-1920s into a full blown commercial press in the 1940s (Coronel, 2003).

In the Second World War (1942-1945) the Philippine press was heavily censored under the Japanese occupation. The guerrilla movement, despite its limitations, was able to publish its underground paper on type written or mimeographed sheets and circulate among the population. After the War ended the press enjoyed the new found freedom with a wide range of publications in the market. The underground press did not return until the 1970s-1980s when President Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law and dissolved Congress in 1972.

The alternative press and popular opposition

In 1965, Ferdinand Marcos was elected as the President of the Philippines. When he declared Martial Law in 1972 the media were deeply affected. Strict censorship was imposed on newspapers. To be sure, the broadcast media were put through a loyalty check before they could resume operation. Furthermore, there was a structural change in the

²² Andres Bonifacio, a young working class from Tondo, served as a propagandist and organizer for the *Liga Filipina* formed by Rizal before Rizal was deported to Dapitan in 1896. His favourite books were Eugene Sue's *Wandering Jew* and the *Ruins of Palmyra*. He preferred *El Filibusterismo* to *Noli* and loved to talk about the French Revolution. As a grown man Andres Bonifacio had read numerous 'protest literature' to inspire him for the revolution (Cristobal, 1997).

ownership of the press. The more or less '*independent press*' was transformed into a '*crony press*' owned either by the Marcos's family or his friends.

In the latter part of 1970s the press became more daring despite instructions from the Media Advisory Council to print only what was deemed suitable. The axe of censorship eventually came down and *We Forum*, with Jose Burgos as its editor, was hard hit. It was banned because of its exposé on Marcos's fake war medals. Since dissident and critical voices were banned they were subsequently forced to go underground. During this period the Communist Party also published its underground papers apart from fighting the government with the New Liberation Army (Coronel, 2003).

The alternative press or the mosquito press as the regime saw it played an important role in telling the truth as opposed to the crony press which toed the official line. *Malaya*, an English weekly tabloid and the sister paper of *We Forum* edited by Burgos, and the *Philippine Collegian*, a University of the Philippines student paper, known for their militant journalism, were at the forefront. The political primacy of press freedom and its power to inform, conscientize and mobilize the people manifested itself during the events surrounding the murder of Senator Benigno Aquino, Jr. in August 1983 and the EDSA Revolution in 1986 when Marcos was toppled. Government news blackout on the murder of Benigno Aquino (Ninoy) resulted in daily protests on the street. Only the alternative press such as *Malaya*, *Business Day*, *Philippine Collegian*, and one radio station, *Radio Veritas*, reported on his murder and his funeral march with 2 million people participating in an 11-hour procession.²³ People sought information from international newspapers through photocopy and video cassette taken by foreign correspondents. Many popular tabloids started to appear at this turning point. *Mr. & Ms. Special Edition*, for instance, sold 800,000 copies on its issues on the post-assassination and the trial. The same publisher put out the *Weekly Inquirer* in early 1985 and within the same year the weekly became a daily paper, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. It was the most prominent paper after the EDSA Revolution in 1986 (Jimenez-Magsanoc, 1998 and Maslog, 1990).

²³ The archdiocese of Manila led by Jaime Cardinal Sin, head of the Philippine Catholic Church, and the business group led by Vicente Jayme, head of the Bishop-Businessmen Conference of the Philippines published *Veritas* newsmagazine in 1983 and joined the alternative press in their dissident reporting.

In addition to printing the truth and proved that its spirit of “*anti-establishment, pro-people, pro-underdog*” was a true spirit, the alternative press, led by *Veritas* news magazine and Corazon Aquino, the widow of Senator Aquino, campaigned for a boycott of the crony press in 1983 and 1984. The boycott from popular opposition was effective in causing the sales to drop and it eventually forced the crony press to change their editorial policies. They have to print the truth in self-defense (Maslog, 1990).

The EDSA Revolution (1986)

The militant journalism of the alternative press together with the shifting position of the crony press in 1983-1984 fore grounded the beginning of the downfall of President Marcos in 1986. When Marcos called a snap election in February 1986 Corazon Aquino decided to run against Marcos.²⁴ The fraud in vote-counting resulted in Cory's call for civil disobedience in the bid to force Marcos to step down and bow to the people's will. The strategy was a general strike on February 26. This was meant to paralyze the economy and render the dictatorship immobile. The Catholic Church was in full support for the civil disobedience movement as it went into motion. From the side of the military, Juan Ponce Enrile and General Fidel Ramos had openly announced their defection and retreated to Camp Aguinaldo. With the recognition of Enrile and Ramos that Cory was the duly elected President of the Republic, *Radio Veritas* broadcasted the mutiny. At this particular juncture, Cardinal Sin went on air to ask the masses to go to EDSA and camp Aguinaldo to support Enrile and Ramos. Consequently, *Radio Veritas* was seized by troops loyal to President Marcos on the second day of the mutiny. But ‘*Radyo Bandido*’ sprang up almost immediately in the vicinity of the camps to issue advice about troop movements and directing the civilian blockade (Magno, 1998). On the other hand, television Channel 4 and 9 were used by Marcos to counter *Radio Veritas* until they were taken over by the people and rebel troops. At EDSA, however, troops and tanks were confronted by un-armed civilian. People came with roses for the soldiers and the nuns held their rosaries and prayed. The masses were communicating peace message to fight the dictatorial regime. After four days of confrontation People Power had succeeded

²⁴ Cory considered running for presidency on condition that she received 1 million signatures supporting her candidacy. The Cory Aquino for President Movement (CAPM) was organized and she easily got the 1 million signatures within a few days (Magno, 1998).

in overthrowing Marcos and Cory Aquino was sworn in as President on February 25 (Constantino-David and David, 1986).

During the 4-day protest at EDSA alternative radio and newspapers in Manila kept the two millions demonstrators informed and continued the stream of mobilization.²⁵ Hence, the media not only informed but opened itself to mobilize people's participation. The media, confronted with such a political crisis, must take side. They became active participant and were solidified with the masses in this struggle. Dionisio (1987), on the other hand, suggested that it was important to understand the role of the alternative media networks in big cities and rural area around the country prior to the political crisis in February. These were small media and group media such as drama, group discussion, independent news network, slides and audio-video cassettes in connection with the activities of social groups, the church and civil society organizations. Thus, the media, especially alternative and small media, were seen marching hand in hand with the people on the road to a free and democratic society.

EDSA 2 : Explosion of multi-media

In EDSA 2, the people were in command of a new kind of media during the impeachment trial and the protest against President Joseph Estrada in January 2001. EDSA 2 was known as the multi-media people's revolt. SMS and the internet were the essential communication media capable of ousting a president dubbed as '*coup de text*' by President Estrada himself. However, Celdran (2002) cautioned on the danger of exaggerating the power of texting, as popularly known in the Philippines, over other important elements at work especially the withdrawal of support from key sectors of society such as the military, big businesses, factions of government bureaucracy, trade unions and the judiciary, the Supreme Court. What should be recognized was the multi-media power to disseminate information, rally demonstrators and accelerate the political crisis. He suggested that there were intricate connections between social organizing, mainstream media and the people's communication network aided by the mobile phone, texting and the internet. The turning of

²⁵ See *On the Scene: The Philippine Press Coverage of the 1986 Revolution* (1987) for detail on how the press covered the People's Revolution. On the other hand, there were diverse forms of dissention in the media and within the people's network that bide civil society together. Humour, church media and revolutionary symbol such as the color chosen to symbolize Cory Aquino was yellow and the 'v' sign using the index finger and the thumb work intricately to erode the legitimacy of the Marcos regime. For a comprehensive understanding on the role of the media and communication networks see *Media Development* (4/1986) special edition on '*Communication and Liberation in the Philippines*'.

virtual mobilization into physical demonstration immediately after the impeachment trial was the first sign of how the networks went into action.

The communication power of texting lies in its capability to by pass journalists, politicians, and commentators. These are the traditional gatekeepers who monopolized the public sphere with their own agenda. With the information and communication technologies (ICT) '*virtual citizens*' found their own means of networking and a voice that would be listened to by the powerful. It is here that Celdran saw the central role of the public in organizing and creating their own series of information and messages in EDSA 2 as opposed to EDSA 1. During EDSA 1, it was the politicians and their organizers who mobilized the public. On the contrary, at EDSA 2, it was the broad and interconnected networks, reaching across different groups of people from different social backgrounds and political shades, who were the key mobilizers of the masses. One message reads;

'Military/PNP nids 2 c 1 million critical mass n EDSA 2moro, Jan, 19, 2 make decision against Erap, pls join, pas on' (Celdran, 2002, p.100)

Prior to the EDSA political rallies the SMS networks saw circulation of anti-Estrada messages, jokes and political rumours and the scandal on '*Juetengate*' and Estrada's unexplained wealth.²⁶ The personal and private networks were gradually transformed into citizen networks and eventually connected to the larger public and politically active networks of communication and action. Civil society organizations which form the main groups of the anti-Estrada campaign were diverse ranging from the moderate Kongreso ng Mamamayang Pilipino (KOMPIL) to the radical Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) (Tenorio, 2001). During the 4-day protests there were 1-5 millions demonstrators at EDSA and big cities around the country and a total of 1.16 billion text messages across the mobile phone network. The linking of information and communication technologies (ICT) to democratic movements

²⁶ During the Revolt there were hundreds of anti-Estrada websites circulating jokes, scandals, caricature and commentaries. People make fun on Estrada's lack of intelligent, his immoral sexual relationship, his acting and political career. For more detail on these people media protest see, **People Power uli, a scrapbook about EDSA 2 with jokes, text messages, photos, digital images and more** (2001). For a full understanding of EDSA 2 and how information and the media played a significant role in the process of the revolt see, "*The Unmaking of a President*" (Coronel, 2001).

demonstrated how people could be empowered and the quality of these networks transformed to enable positive changes in the area of politics and socio-cultural policies.

In the following section we look at how the power of information in the form of investigative journalism help shape citizen understanding and empower their consciousness. The result is the synchronization of people's media, communication rights and political action.

Access to Public Information and Investigative Journalism

In 1989, eight like-minded journalists formed the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ). They are reporters, writers and editors who were critical of the structure of the newspapers, the daily routine and the conflict between proprietors' interests and journalistic ideals. In these conditions in-depth report was difficult to carry out if not impossible in some newspapers. This group of journalist has in mind a new kind of journalistic report that would improve the quality of news reporting as well as extending the citizen right to access public information. Ideally, the media must work unceasingly as a genuine watchdog.²⁷ Sheila Coronel, PCIJ Executive Director, believes that investigative journalism would widen the scope of journalistic freedom,²⁸

“by constantly digging for information, by forcing government and the private sector to release documents, and by subjecting officials and other powerful individuals to rigorous questioning, investigative journalists expand the boundaries of what is possible to print or air.”

The techniques of investigative reporting depend basically on the use of public record, extensive interview and in-depth and long-term research. These kinds of digging would inevitably result in in-depth exposé of wrong doing in the government, members of

²⁷ The Philippines Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) is able to access official information and distribute their investigative reports on government corruption and abuse of power on <http://www.pcij.org> in the '*i-site*' section and *i* magazine and through their media subscribers, who in turn, publish these reports for their specific readers at the same time.

PCIJ is a small organization with a staff of 11 people who all come together with an idealism and faith in a watchdog press that would contribute to a vibrant democracy. They believe that citizens cannot debate intelligently if they do not have the information they need. They cannot decide wisely if they are bereft of knowledge. For an in-depth profile of the organization and the staff see Daswani, et al. (2001).

²⁸ Sheila Coronel was working with an underground newspaper during the Martial Law years. It was the only way to get the truth out under an authoritarian regime. The mode of production was basically typing the report on stencil and each copy was printed on silkscreen. Only 500 copies were printed each time. There was the danger of arrest and seizure that the paper could not be photo copied openly.

Congress, and the Court. Investigative reporting must focus on unreported issues whereas public journalism concentrate on issues that matter for the community (Yvonne Chua, interview, 3 February 2004). These could be used effectively to expose the link between politicians and logging, the evil of child labor, and the roots of military mutinies, for instance, as disseminated in some of PCIJ's major reports in the past years.

In her Magsaysay award lecture, Coronel pointed out that investigative reports on issues relevant to the lives of Filipinos work to inform as well as empower the citizens. At the end of the day, it would bring about positive change. The People Power movement during EDSA 2 in January 2001 was the example par excellence on how powerful an informed citizenry could be. The series of investigative reports on President's Estrada unexplained wealth were discussed and debated by citizens who had an interest in the affairs of government. In addition, three of PCIJ's reports were cited in the impeachment complaint filed by the House of Representatives against the President. Outside the Congress during the four days at EDSA it was an informed citizenry who oust a thieving president. And this is clearly the power of conscientious reporting in holding officials to account. With hindsight, Coronel saw that an acquiescent press bred an unquestioning citizenry. The reason Marcos remained so long in power was not only because he terrorized the population and used the military to rein in dissenters. It was also because he controlled the media and the flow of information. And as Marcos's monopoly over news and information crumbled, so did his regime. Both People's Revolution, EDSA 1 and EDSA 2, demonstrated the centrality of information and citizen empowerment. Without doubt democracy relied on collective wisdom and action of informed citizens.

People's Media Advancing in the Globalized Era

In the Philippines and Indonesia information and communication are integral to people's media and their network. Our research showed that in the 1980s-1990s the majority of the mainstream media are neutralized in their commercial set up. They either serve the market or their political masters or both. It is in this kind of condition that social movements, civil society and non-governmental organizations protested against the violation of their communication rights. Their clandestine media whether type written news sheets during the Marcos era or the internet news list under Soeharto's New Order took the genuine media

spirit of disseminating the truth. Hence, started the unraveling of these dictatorial regimes. In EDSA 2, it was the combination of multi-media technologies, especially '*texting*', with the aid of mainstream newspapers, television and radio which speeded up the People's Revolt. But this must be seen in connection with a well informed citizenry and an active political front of the anti-Estrada campaign.

In Indonesia people's media activism take the form of community radio and neighbourhood internet. This means the people are taking control of their own communication channel. Their experiences show the significance of communication rights which include the right to own and have access to the media channel. Not merely as producers of content nor consumer of media products. PCIJ and Radio 68-H, on the other hand, are examples of media activism that focus on empowering people through information. In both countries the praxis of media activism encompass not a single purpose but a wide ranging objectives. These include influencing content and practices of mainstream media, building independent, democratic and participatory media - alternative media that give voice to the marginalized, opening new channels of communication independent of state and corporate controls, changing the relationship between audiences and media by empowering audiences to be conscientious citizen and advocating for reform in media policies in order to change the very structure of media institutions (Hackett, 2000).

It would be misleading to conclude that community radio or PCIJ, for instance, is meant only to build independent, democratic and participatory media although it would seem so at a glance. Community radio is people's media precisely because it changes the relationship between audiences and media. Audiences are no longer listener or consumer of programs. They become producers, host, or contributors of his/her community station. There is a shifting of role. A constant reversal and spiral of cycles that empower and extend the communication rights of the people. At a broader level, community radio, Radio 68-H and PCIJ are influencing the content and practice of the mainstream media. Coronel pointed out that after a decade or so there is now more interests and more investigative reporting in the Philippines mainstream media (interview, November 2003). Community radio, on the other hand, emerging as a real competitor to local commercial radio. They may not compete directly for advertising revenue (since this is forbidden) but their programs are more relevant

in terms of genre, content, language, and most significantly, in the existing communication network in the community.

Finally, this new generation of alternative or people's media is challenging the very structure of media institution. They are demonstrating a non-market oriented model of democratic media. Obviously, if people's media continue to grow and advance in this direction they would be a real threat to the media industry. Structural transformation would be inevitable one way or the other.

Communication rights are part and parcel of the basic human rights guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the new globalized environment the need and the real guarantee for this basic right, at an individual, communal and national levels, as a tool for survival, self reliance and development, and not least to participate in one's own community, is an absolutely key in the present '*post-modern*' socio-economic and political mediascape (Hamelink, 2003, 2004). Since media professionalism and representative '*expression*' has often eroded the '*voice of the voiceless*' as the majority of the mainstream media are controlled by media conglomerates who allied themselves closely with the state. Today, freedom of the press alone is insufficient as a guarantee for people's communication rights. In this kind of illusive environment and restrictions in the communication sphere there is little room for genuine public debate nor alternative space for dissent or opposition expressions. The people, nonetheless, have found their way of networking, speaking and participating through old and new means of information technologies. In so doing, they are creating a mode of communication which is relevant and dialogic, and not least, horizontal in nature. Their effort, therefore, is a process of restructuring the political economy of communications infrastructure and cultural environment to enrich themselves as active citizens. This would, hopefully, pave the way towards the long term concern on achieving their education, cultural autonomy and participatory democracy at all levels of a people's livelihood.

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