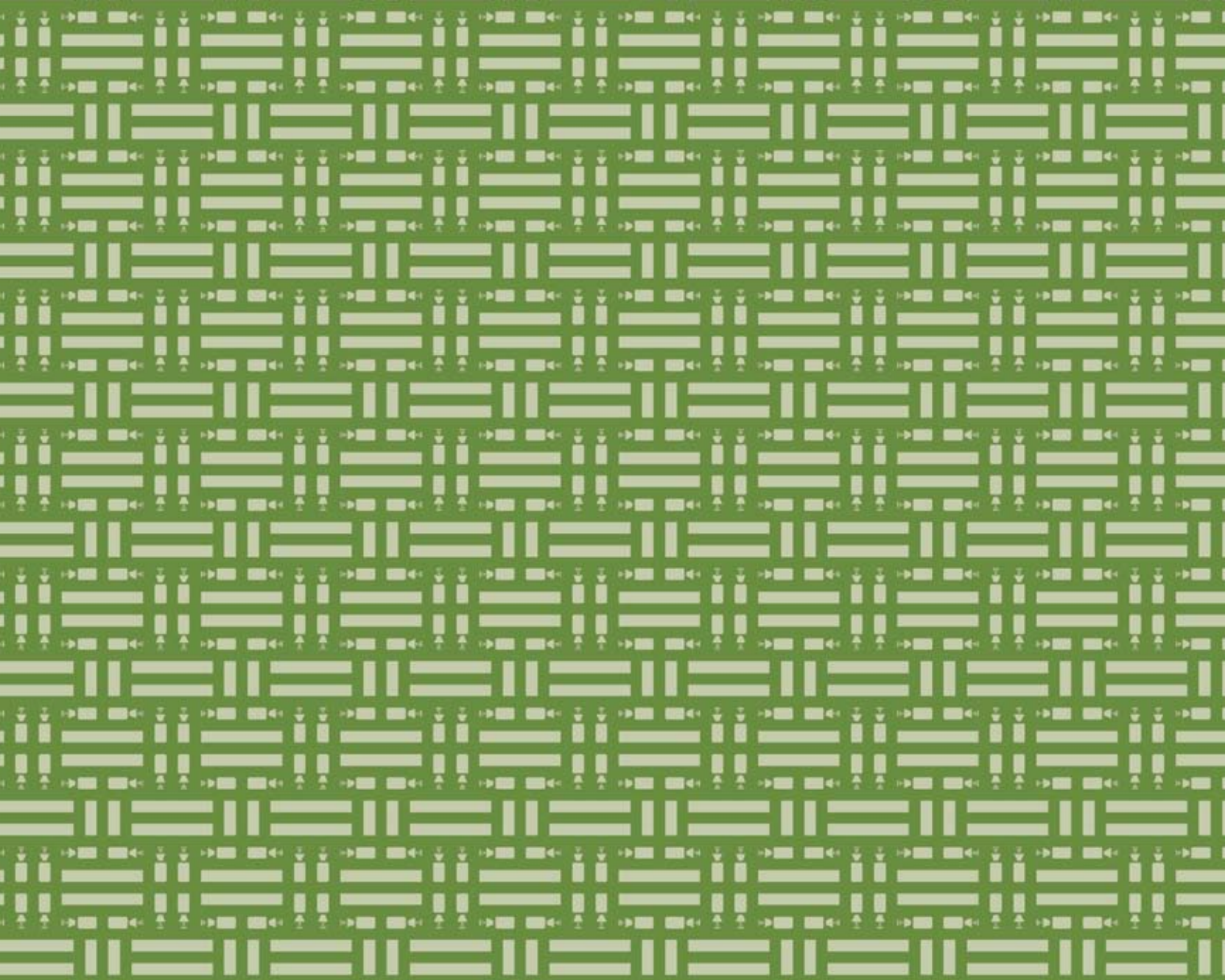
Research Report by: **KUNCI Cultural Studies Center & EngageMedia**



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The past decade in Indonesia has seen a dramatic increase in the use of video as a social change tool by community, campaign and activist organisations. Access to the tools for producing video have become increasingly democratised over this period, and rapidly adopted. Since the fall of Suharto's New Order regime, space has been opened up for a host of new media projects to emerge. Individuals and organisations dealing with issues such as the environment, human rights, queer and gender issues, cultural pluralism, militarism, poverty, labour rights, globalisation and more have embraced video as a tool to communicate with both their bases and new audiences.

Over the past three years EngageMedia has been increasingly involved in video distribution in Indonesia, as part of a broader approach to networking video and technology activists and campaigners throughout the Asia-Pacific region. These approaches have manifested in more than ten video distribution workshops in Indonesia, Transmission Asia-Pacific, a meeting of more than fifty video activists and technologists in Sukabumi, West Java, in May 2008; and now two Indonesian-based staff of EngageMedia.

In approaching this work, however, there were obvious limitations; as an Australian organisation, EngageMedia did not have extensive knowledge of what groups were currently active in producing social and environmental video in the archipelago, the history of that work, how it was currently being distributed, and how activists were thinking they might approach distribution in the future. For EngageMedia, whose aim is to build a Asia-Pacific video network, these were issues that needed to be understood.

A collaborative research process was initiated with KUNCI Cultural Studies Center to pursue these questions. This publication is the core outcome of that research. By analysing its history, mapping the current situation, and considering future possibilities, we aim to bring new light to video activism in Indonesia and begin the process of asking many more questions. We hope *Videochronic* serves as a guide for exploring the social change possibilities of employing new media technologies in many different places, and also assists those inside Indonesia to reflect on the work done to date, and the many paths emerging.

KUNCI Cultural Studies Center is a non-profit and independent organization established in Yogyakarta, Indonesia in 1999, working to create an Indonesian society that is culturally critical, open, and empowered. Its mission is to develop cultural studies based on the spirit of exploration and experimentation and to advance it into a wider movement through popular education practices.

http://www.kunci.or.id

EngageMedia uses the power of video, the internet and free software technologies to affect social and environmental change. We believe independent media and free and open technologies are fundamental to building the movements needed to challenge social injustice and environmental damage, as well as to provide and present solutions.

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VIDEOCHRONIC:
Video Activism and Video Distribution in Indonesia
by:
KUNCI Cultural Studies Center
and EngageMedia

Published in 2009 by:
EngageMedia
PO Box 1322
Collingwood
VIC 3066 Australia
contact@engagmedia.org
www.engagemedia.org
online version available at
http://engagemedia.org/videochronic

VIDEOCHRONIC: Video Activism and Online Video in Indonesia
ISBN: 978-0-646-52000-1
Cinema, Media, Technology

Produced by
EngageMedia and KUNCI Cultural Studies Center
Key Researchers:
Ferdiansyah Thajib M.A. and Nuraini Juliastuti M.Sc.
Project Manager & Editor: Andrew Lowenthal
Research Consultant and Production Coordinator:
Alexandra Crosby
Proofreaders: Budi Warsito & Barry Saunders
Sub-editor: Amelia Dalton
Designer: Arief Darmawan
E-mail: ariefdarmawan.p100@gmail.com

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Printed by **Gamma Bintang Grafika - Jakarta**
Printed on **Cyclus 100% recycled.**
Cyclus is manufactured from FSC 100% recycled pulp, supporting responsible use of forest resources.

FORDFOUNDATION

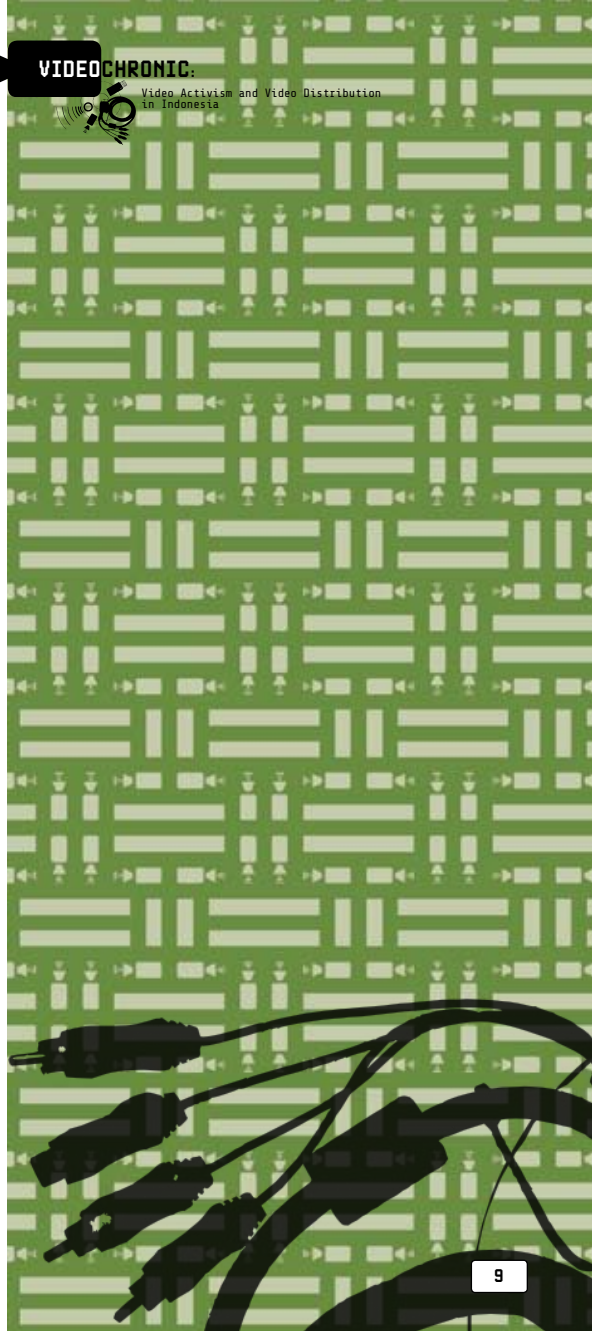
This research and publication was supported through a grant from the **Ford Foundation.**

INTRODUCTION

This research explores the relationship between social movements and technologies associated with video and online distribution. In Indonesia, that relationship is new and in a state of perpetual transition. To begin, the technologies intersect with a variety of different politics as activists define their goals in the post-Suharto era. We ask how these technologies are currently being used and how they might be used in the future to enhance progressive social-change agendas.

A. A Chronicle of Video in Motion in Post-1998 Indonesia

The development of video and communications technologies has had a major impact on social transformation in contemporary Indonesia and the social movements that brought an end to Suharto's New Order regime. The social-change agenda that was initiated in 1998 is far from over, and today has diverged into multiple currents. Social change movements in contemporary Indonesia represent an array of conflicting interests, ideologies and identity formations. Yet alongside this is the convergence of diverse forms of cultural production mediated by advanced digital technologies.



The proliferation of video production and the burgeoning online sphere has introduced new ways of communicating that intensify the connectedness of agents from different settings – including those within the social-change movement. There has been very little research, however, on how activists in Indonesia incorporate the developments in video technology into their practice, or how they engage with the possibilities of strategic distribution, particularly online.

Indonesia is in a state of transition, politically and socially, but also in relation to the many technologies discussed in this research. Access to video-production tools, the internet and mobile technologies, while still limited, is increasing dramatically. This research charts how activists are engaging with these technologies in the Indonesian context, addressing issues that emerge from the interplay between social movements and technology, and exploring the potential and limitations of online video distribution. The central questions addressed by this research are:

1. What are the structures of the post-1998 social movements in Indonesia and how are they shaping, and shaped by, the development of video and online technology?

2. Who are the key actors in the field of video-based social activism and how do they appropriate video-based knowledge production for social transformation?

3. With the increase in internet access, how do Indonesian video activists respond to the development of online distribution?

4. What kind of cultural transformation models emerge out of the new map of video-based social movements, and how can these be developed into strategies for engagement with local, national and global networks?

B. Methodology and Approach

While designed initially as a mapping exercise of video activism and online video distribution across Indonesia, this research focused on materials and informants within the scope of Java and Bali. These locations became centre stage because video production and distribution activities are still concentrated in this part of Indonesia, arguably due to the uneven development of the country's communication infrastructure, which is very much bound by the scope of market activity. However, the research team is also aware that more video-based activities are burgeoning outside this space. Realising that the scope of the research could expand to an unmanageable scale, we decided to start from the areas of video-related activities to which we had previously been exposed, so that the research would have some solid points of departure.

Our initial research isolated certain trends within the wider phenomenon of public video production and distribution in Indonesia. It was clear that the development of audio-visual recording technology, such as portable video camcorders and mobile phones, had become for many people an inseparable part of everyday life, with a range of purposes from "just having fun", to advertising, promotion or advocating certain political agendas. This is also indicated by the burgeoning use of video-sharing spaces such as YouTube, MySpace, Facebook, kompas.com, detik.com and others. This research, however, pays attention to video production and distribution that is for the explicit purpose of promoting social justice, human rights and environmental causes.

This research argues that inherent in the appropriation of technology (through a process of democratising video production and distribution) is the potential for significant network development among these movements in Indonesia. In doing so, the analysis employs two interlocking approaches. Firstly, we locate existing organisational structures among video activists and distributors, observing how these structures operate within different groups. Secondly, through a process of interviewing key players in video activism and distribution, we explore the more informal ways collectives and networks operate.

C. Fieldwork Notes

Data collection and analysis was carried out in several ways, such as reviewing related websites, documents and articles, and interviewing informants. A focus-group discussion involving a dozen video activists was also held in April 2009, in Jakarta, to provide feedback on the preliminary findings. Overall, there were 20 groups (28 individuals) interviewed (see interview list page 66) by both researchers conducted in three different cities in Java: Yogyakarta, Jakarta and Bandung.

Other informants based in locations beyond our reach were interviewed via email, such as members of Imporal in Semarang and Ragam operator Aryo Danusiri.

D. Report Structure

The fourth chapter situates online video within the broader practices of media distribution. The aim is to envisage the possibility of developing strategies for disseminating ideas through video appropriate to the current context, as well as in the future, strategies that will be explored further in the conclusion.

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Within the text are two boxes (Chronicles), containing some expanded notes on subjects we wish to highlight. Here, we raise discussions about frictions and appropriations of meanings, as well as exploring a seminal model of online media convergence. These case studies are included to bring attention to some of the broader concerns of media activism which, in turn, can lead to more informed reflections.

The last part of this report offers several preliminary conclusions concerning the current junctures of video activism, networking and online distribution and possible future trajectories.

CORPORATE
SLEEPER CELL
DJ HOT VOL-4
HEIST
FIGHT CLUB
ART HEIST/ARTWORKS
THE UNIT-TAPE 2
NUMB3RS
NUMB3RS-TAPE 2
NUMB3RS-TAPE 3
AMAZING RACE 4-TAPE 1
FILMFARE AWARDS 2008
N.C.I.S-TAPE 2
STOP

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF VIDEO ACTIVISM IN INDONESIA

This chapter focuses on the historical aspects of video technology in Indonesia, concentrating particularly on how video has been appropriated as a medium for expressing multiple realities, and how it has supported social movements through the dissemination of critical voices.

That the rapid development of media technologies is interrelated with social transformation in Indonesia is a proposition endorsed by various analyses that point to how such technologies have helped mobilise dissent within the national political landscape, in particular leading to the demise of Suharto's three-decade authoritarian government. Prominent examples of the intersections between technological development and social movements in Indonesia include the role of the internet as an alternative civic space that allows political engagement to bypass the control of the nation-state (Lim, 2003a; 2003b; 2006; Sen and Hill, 1997) and the advent of video as a real-time imagery that corroded the dominance of the state-imposed cultural model of citizenship (Sen, 2000).

A. Late-1970s to 1990s: The First Stage of Video-based Social Practices

The development of video in Indonesia has been propelled by the rapid distribution of images and information by transnational electronic media and the new possible sets of reality constructed by this media.

According to Arjun Appadurai, through the information produced within what he calls "mediascapes", audiences can experience and transform "imagined lives, their own as well as those of others living in other places" (1996: 35). In Indonesia, these mediascapes can be traced back to the early 1980s, when video technology made an entrance and thrived among the new middle class, which was increasing rapidly during the economic growth period of the New Order due to a boom in state-sponsored natural resource exploitation, such as in oil and timber. This period was marked by the popularity of "imagined lives" on screen – Indian Bollywood movies, Hong Kong action series, as well as local films – consumed on video cassettes (Betamax and VHS) and distributed by outlets called *penjualan/persewaan* or *palwa* (sales/rental).

Beyond the consumption patterns described above, audio-visual content in Indonesia was implicated in the Indonesian Nationalist project through the establishment of the first national television network TVRI (*Televisi Republik Indonesia*) and later by the launch in the late 1970s of the Palapa communication satellite. Both technologies became a means for Suharto's New Order regime to extend its political authority, sugar-coated with developmentalist logic.

Like many New Order cultural policies, however, the government's approach to video was fraught with contradictions. As identified by Forum Lenteng in their preliminary study on the history of video in Indonesia, Video Base, during the analog video period (1970s to late 1990s), which was marked by the increased use of video-cassette recorders (VCR), the state decided the medium had the potential to endanger its dominance. From then, the New Order took anticipative measures to contain and control video-related practices, ranging from censorship and the introduction of new taxes on the sale and screening of video cassettes, to the classification of videos to prevent piracy (Forum Lenteng, 2009). Aware that video is inherently a powerful medium of communication, the authoritarian government also exploited the new technology to sustain its hegemony by producing and disseminating

images and information that reinforced its domination. This was conspicuous, for instance, in the anti-communist propaganda film *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI* (The Treachery of the 30th September Movement/Indonesian Communist Party), annual screenings of which were compulsory every September on national television, in commercial cinemas and in all Indonesian public schools (Forum Lenteng, 2009).

In the late 1980s the production and consumption of analog video images was heightened by the advent of private television stations. The stations showed a variety of content, but the format that dominated were the serial dramas named *sinema elektronik* (electronic cinema) or *sinetron*, akin to "soap operas". The ubiquity of *sinetron* coincided with an increase in video-production practices. Krisna Sen (2000) has shown that between 1991 and 1994, when the Indonesian (celluloid-based) film industries went into rapid decline, feature-length video production rose by almost 50 per cent. Shortly after video production experienced another boost when, in 1995, digital video (DV) cameras were released on the market for relatively low prices by manufacturers such as Sony, JVC, Panasonic and others (Jayasrana, 2008). Being much cheaper than the previous analog models, the recording technology became accessible to more diverse sectors of Indonesian society.

From the above we can see how the discourse and everyday video practices in Indonesia simultaneously display the interconnection between functions of production, distribution and consumption. While we may be able to trace a linear development from analog to digital technology, from expanding television broadcast to increasing quantity of video production, the same pattern does not appear in all aspects of consumption and distribution. The pattern of video consumption and distribution, starting from video-cassette technology (VHS and Betamax), to laser disc, to VCD about 1997 and then DVD about 2003 (Jayasrana, 2008), engaged the public unevenly rather than as a single audience. Only some steps in this development, such as the cheaply reproduced VCD, increased access for those from lower economic classes and those living in rural areas. VCD is still widely used in Indonesia because both the player and the disc are much cheaper, although the picture quality is significantly lower than DVD. The mass distribution of pirated VCD and DVD materials under Indonesia's official legal radar has also extended the scope of consumption beyond the divisions of economic class (Juliastuti, 2008).

B. 1998, Approaching and Recovering: Annotating Media Democratisation

The experience of the 1998 political uprising showed video-makers the power of audio-visual representation and dissemination in generating extensive socio-political changes by mobilising people in support of particular causes. People still remember how the private television stations of Indonesia repeatedly aired footage of the shootings of Trisakti University students in Jakarta. These images sparked sentiments of national solidarity, leading to mass student protests in several cities across Indonesia, denouncing the New Order regime. About the late 1990s, footage of human rights abuses in East Timor was televised. globally and became one of the key factors in garnering international support for Timor-Leste's independence.

Post-Suharto Indonesia saw an unleashing of media production and distribution, both commercial and non-profit. With regional areas in Indonesia gaining more autonomy, calls for information decentralisation and democratisation became more widespread. Increasing consumption of cable television, computers, the internet and mobile phones, along with growing numbers of local stations, brought mediated events further into people's lives. From an activist perspective, this was perceived as having the potential to foster participation and broaden the social-change agenda. The DV camera functioned as a kind of personal technology that allowed the operator autonomy and power over the production of content, which spurred the practice of citizen media.

The media explored for social justice causes approaching the Reformation was not limited to video. Under the umbrella of the anti-New Order movement and the discourses of change, there were several accomplishments made by alternative print media in the form of community newsletters such as *Angkringan* and local zines such as *Aikon* or those published by Peniti Pink (Juliastuti, 2006). On the internet, communication media such as chat rooms and mailing lists flourished as forums for discussion that could circumvent militaristic state repression. At that time, the Tempo website (initiated after the New Order shut down *Tempo, Detektif & Romantika,* and *Editor* magazines in 1994), newsletter Suara Independen, and the mailing list *Apakabar* were some of the notable examples of information providers with new critical and reflective approaches. The ways these oppositional media were distributed, informally and anonymously using existing social networks, contributed to the formation of the video distribution networks discussed in Chapter 4.

One of the key questions regarding the unfolding development of video is whether the changes present opportunities for people to participate in broader chains of cultural production. We have distilled some thoughts on media participation into two interrelated strands, the first related to the empowerment

of marginalised communities through video, the second as a reaction to the more general exclusions created by capitalist media.

The first one departs from an understanding of the context and residue of Suharto's dictatorship. Where people's experiences and memories of being used as objects of repression are still deeply inscribed, media participation and first-person storytelling become crucial agendas to pursue. Learning from the character of video as a profound and flexible medium for communication, those active in the civil society movements can start to adopt video as a means of social recovery and transformation.

Regarding the community empowerment projects currently burgeoning in Indonesia, video as a participatory tool can be linked to a global history that can be traced back to the late 1960s. In Indonesia, an embryonic model was developed by Yogyakarta-based Pusat Kateketik (PUSKAT) in the early '80s through its facilitation of a community in East Flores in coping with leprosy and its social impact. Insist founder Roem Topatimasang was also instrumental through his video advocacy work with people living in Kei Island, Maluku, struggling for their traditional rights (Atmaja, Azis & Tomatipassang, 2007). Video continues to thrive as a community empowerment method,as demonstrated by many of the groups introduced in the following chapter.

The second development is related to the overload of sound and images currently dominating the mainstream media in Indonesia. In this context, the audience is confronted with content that tends to banalise the hegemony of political authority and capitalist logic in the public domain of entertainment. This entertainment serves the dual function of bolstering the economically established middle class and providing an escape for the lower classes from the conditions of everyday life. These practices place mainstream audio-visual form and content production at risk of closure to new creative ideas. This situation has given activists a sense of urgency to create new and more representative audiovisual material. Easy access to video and other technologies (camcorders, computers and video-editing software) encourages emerging local (independent) film-makers to cultivate new communities and open new avenues of public access and interaction using non-mainstream video. Such avenues, discussed further in Chapter 4, include alternative cinema spaces and various festivals reaching wide public audiences (Jayasrana, 2008).

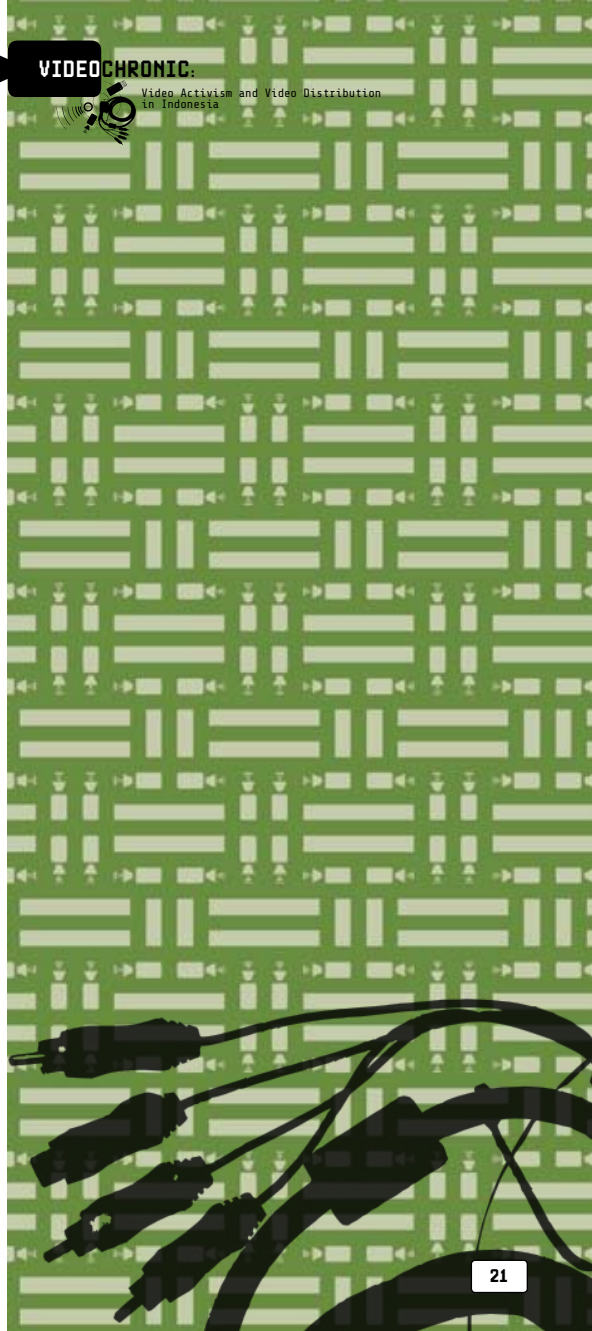
Many efforts have already been made by activists in Indonesia, both towards and at the end of the New Order, as well as during the media democratisation of the Reformation period, to employ video for the purpose of social change. In the next chapter we will discuss the various technological and socio-cultural developments of both mainstream and oppositional media, and a new structure of activism in which pro-democratic values and video appropriation coalesce into a variety of forms.

MAPPING VIDEO ACTIVISM IN INDONESIA

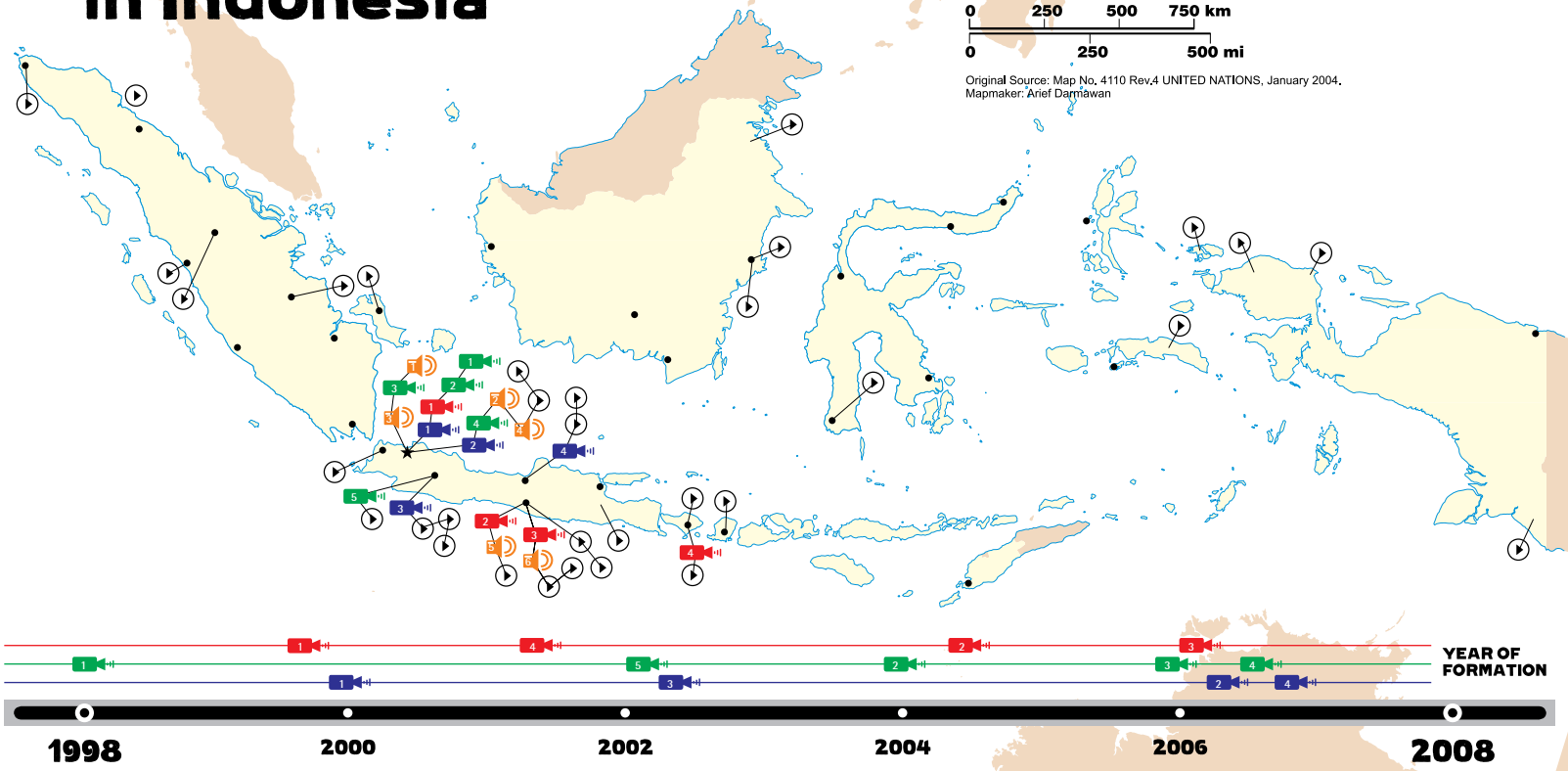
The multitude of everyday video activities has produced a variety of objectives and understandings about media practice. A range of practices, from conservative to radical, from the banal to the political, have emerged as part of everyday video production in Indonesia. Political parties run their video campaigns on YouTube, teenagers rate videos of their favourite pop stars and punks document police brutality. There is no single definition that can encompass the emerging video-generating activities currently within the public realm.

This research, however, is concerned with video as a form of activism that exists within a progressive social movement, pushing to expand the boundaries of cultural and informational access, and make tangible changes to people's everyday realities. In practical terms, this movement comprises actions that boost participation and access to communication processes and other social spheres beyond the medium itself.

Departing from the historical outlook of the previous chapter, here we develop a map of the current contexts of video activism, distinguishing between democratisation *through* the medium of video and the democratisation of the medium itself. While the former agenda underpins the use of video to promote democratic social transformation at either structural or community levels, the latter aims for equal access to the production processes themselves, as well as enhanced understanding and literacy in relation to the medium. The video-based activism observed in this research has taken a range of positions and follows a number of trajectories within these two defining agendas.



Map of Video Activism in Indonesia



Ragam
website: www.ragam.org

Etnoreflika
Jl. Turonggo No. 26, Kuncen, Yogyakarta.
e-mail: etnoreflika@hotmail.com,
etnoreflika@gmail.com
website: http://etnoreflika.multiply.com

Kampung Halaman
Jalan Bausasran DN III/594
Yogyakarta 55211
e-mail: mail@kampunghalaman.org;
kampung.halaman@yahoo.com
website: www.kampunghalaman.org

Kawanusa
Jl Buana Kubu gang Kembang Soka No. 2
Padang Sambian, Denpasar Barat, 80117.
e-mail: kawanusa@kawanusa.co.id
website: www.kawanusa.co.id

Offstream
website: www.offstream.tv

Javin
Jaringan Video Independen (Javin)

UPC
Urban Poor Consortium (UPC)
Billy Moon Blok H I/7 Jakarta 13450
e-mail: upc@urbanpoor.or.id
website: www.urbanpoor.or.id

Gekko Studio
Jl. Palem Putri No. 1, Taman Yasmin 5, Bogor
e-mail: info@gekkovoices.com
website: www.gekkovoices.com

KoPI
Komunitas Perfilman Intertesktual (KoPI)

ruangrupa
Tebet Timur Dalam Raya no.6
Jakarta Selatan 12820
e-mail: info@ruangrupa.org
website: www.ruangrupa.org

Forum Lenteng
Jl. Raya Lenteng Agung No.34, Jakarta 12610
website: www.forumlentengjakarta.org
website: www.akumassa.org

VideoBabes
website: http://videobabes.whatiswho.net

Imporal
Jl. Singosari 2 No. 12 Semarang, Jawa Tengah.
e-mail: importalmail@yahoo.com
website: http://importal.wordpress.com

Konfiden
Jl. Cilandak Tengah No. 59 Jakarta 12430
e-mail: kotaksurat@konfiden.or.id
website: www.konfiden.or.id

The Marshall Plan
Jl. Cilandak Tengah No. 59, Jakarta 12430
e-mail: info@themarshall.org
website: www.themarshall.org

In-Docs
website: www.in-docs.org

Beoscope
Menara Duta 7th Floor Wing C
Jl. HR Rasuna Said Kav. B-9. Jakarta 12910
e-mail: beoscope_center@beoscope.com
website: www.beoscope.com

VideoBattle
Jl. Nagan Lor 17, Patehan, Kraton
Yogyakarta 55133
e-mail: videobattle@gmail.com
website: www.video-battle.net

Combine
Combine Resource Institution
Jl. Ngadisuryan 26
Yogyakarta 55133
e-mail: office@combine.or.id
website: www.combine.or.id

East Kalimantan
Documentary Video, Kawanusa in cooperation with SHK Kaltim and DFID

Manusela National Park
Documentary Video by Kawanusa in cooperation with Manusela National Park

Manokwari
Documentary Video, Kawanusa in cooperation with Alternatives Canada

Raja Ampat
Documentary Video, Kawanusa in cooperation with Conservation International Indonesia

Senganan, Penebel
Community Video, Kawanusa

Kradenan, Bantul
Community Video, Etnoreflika in cooperation with AKSARA

Sukabumi
Participatory Video, Etnoreflika in cooperation with LATIN Learning Center

Yogyakarta
Participatory Video, Etnoreflika in cooperation with YIN, JFPR-ADB & YLPS Humana

Jambi
Participatory Video, Kampung Halaman

Karang Ploso, Piyungan, Bantul
Participatory Video Project Kampung Halaman

Tasikmalaya
Participatory Video, Kampung Halaman

Ponorogo
Participatory Video, Kampung Halaman

Sukolilo, Pati
Participatory Video, Kampung Halaman, Maruli Sihombing

Naggroe Aceh Darussalam
Documentary Video, OffStream

Mentawai
Documentary Video, Rahung Nasution, Javin

Malang
Participatory Video, Etnoreflika in cooperation with Save the Children

Tanjung Priok, Jakarta
Documentary Video, Maruli Sihombing, UPC

Sukolilo, Pati
Documentary Video, Maruli Sihombing

Bukit Lawang/ Leuser National Park
Documentary Video, Gekko Studio

Dayak Punan Tribe, Malinau
Documentary Video by Gekko Studio in cooperation with JEEF, Aman, Telapak

- Knasaimos Tribe, South Sorong
Documentary Video, Gekko Studio in cooperation with JEEF, Aman & Telapak.

- Meratus
Documentary Video, Gekko Studio

- Rinjani
Documentary Video, Gekko Studio in cooperation with WWF

- Seko Tribe, North Luwu
Documentary Video, Gekko Studio in cooperation with JEEF, Aman & Telapak

- Sidoarjo
Documentary Video, Gekko Studio in coperation with WALHI

- Bukit Duabelas National Park
Community Video, Ragam in cooperation with Sokola

- Merauke, West Papua
Documentary Video, Aryo Danusiri, Ragam

- Serangan
Community Video, Ragam in cooperation with GEF-SGP & PPLH Bali

- Gardu Unik, Cirebon
AkuMassa Project,Intervention Site, Forum Lenteng

- Komunitas Sarueh, Padang Panjang
Akumassa Project, Intervention Site, Forum Lenteng

- Saidjah Forum, Lebak
Akumassa Project, Intervention Site, Forum Lenteng

- Cisompet, Garut
Documentary Video, KoPI

- Kampung Laut, Segara Anakan
Documentary Video, KoPI in collaboration with Kantor Bantuan Hukum Purwokerto and Kampung Laut Community

A. Positions and Trajectories of Video Activism

Video activists in Indonesia include individuals and groups from different social backgrounds, ideologies, approaches, sites of intervention and audiences. We identified at least three main approaches to video practice in Indonesia: (1) activism working to transform grassroots communities through participation in video production (from here on addressed as "grassroots video activism"); (2) activism based on tactical initiatives that produce video aimed at influencing public perception and key decision-makers (from here on addressed as "tactical video activism"); and (3) activism based on technological experimentation and deconstruction of imagery as a means for shifting the relation between the audiences and the medium (from here on addressed as "experimental video activism").

The above distinctions are an effort to envisage the different dimensions of video activism rather than to categorise them. Rather than being mutually exclusive, these three realms of video activism are situated along a spectrum of interwoven practices. This research produces a map which attempts to understand how the different types of interwoven, yet discrete video practices, shift according to technological and ideological dynamics. It then attempts to relate these shifts to broader social movements.

1. Grassroots Video Activists

As part of this research, four groups can be identified as grassroots activists that use video as their primary medium to produce social transformation. The organisational configuration of grassroots activism is generally in groups, though not all of them become institutionalised as NGOs. Each group has their own approach, with differing emphasis toward process and outcomes.

Formed in 2006, Kampung Halaman (KH), based in Yogyakarta, Central Java, work with youth living in what Kampung Halaman term the "transitional districts". "Transitional" refers to areas located between urban centers and/or communities undergoing socio-economic changes. Etnoreflika, also in Yogakarta, was founded by alumni students of Gadjah Mada University to work among socially marginalised communities, according to their motto:"cameras for the people". Kawanusa has been engaging with six village communities in Bali since its foundation in 2004 by Yoga Atmaja, while Ragam was the initiative of documentary film-maker Aryo Danusiri, formed to promote video as a medium for cross-cultural exchange among different indigenous communities. Ragam, however, has been non-operational since Danusiri left to study abroad.

The programs developed by the above groups revolve around the problems associated with the domination of mainstream and commercial media as a primary information source, particularly television and commercial film. Images circulated by these industries are regarded as not representative of the interests, and lack relevance to the daily situations of

many communities. In turn, this situation inhibits people's capacity to develop critical responses to such messages and to voice opinions about their immediate problems or conditions. To address these issues through grassroots organising, these groups hold video-production workshops for community members, provide infrastructure and supporting facilities, as well as organise events to ensure the results of such efforts reach a public audience. Rather than an end result, the video produced by such communities are understood as the *beginning* of a process of self-empowerment, through which the medium is perceived to produce a process of interaction and education that can lead to real social transformation.

During the development of such initiatives, heated debates often occur between members of the organisations and the communities with which they work, as well as within these organisations and communities. This friction exists around various issues, from representations of the communities and the impact of video technology on the formation of new group identities, to how the works are disseminated and to whom. The practices of such organisations raise many questions: How can transformational ideas be sustained through video practices on a grassroots level, even when they are no longer facilitated by an organisation? How can it be ensured that the provision of access to video technologies will not create new social hierarchies between those who have video literacy and those who do not? These questions are connected to the types of community engagement and how those engagements are imagined and practised by grassroots activists. The concluding chapter will address these issues further within the context of broader social transformation.

2. Tactical Video Activists

This grouping encompasses those who are engaging with tactical uses of video content production and distribution. The term "tactical" here refers to flexibility in the forms employed (e.g. documentary, investigative reporting, raw footage, music videos), the variety of issues highlighted (e.g. environmental damage, human rights abuses, gender inequality, class conflict, ethnic violence, poverty, political protest) and the methods of distribution employed (e.g. as part of political campaigns, on YouTube, DailyMotion, DVD etc.). The video-makers who belong to this group have different professional backgrounds, ranging from documentary film-makers and television journalists to political organisers, particularly those engaged in the movements around 1998. They also work in a diverse range of organising patterns, including individual commissions, freelance employment with various organisations, simultaneously, as professional activists, forming loose groups or networks, or founding formal institutions.

Included in this group is: Offstream, established by Lexy J. Rambadetta and focusing on documentary work; KoPI, which is based in Bandung, West Java, and also working in the documentary genre; Fendry Ponomban and

Rahung Nasution, who, aside from forming Jaringan Video Independen (JAVIN), also independently produce videos with political content; Maruli Sihombing, who is active at the Urban Poor Consortium (UPC); and Gekko Studio, in Bogor, West Java, which concentrates on environmental issues.

The term "tactical video" here is an extension of Michel De Certeau's concept (1984), which distinguishes strategic and tactical actions in the domain of popular culture. The distinction emphasises the different practices of privileged subjects who can "strategically" signify, develop and master the informational fields, and "the weak", who are able to execute performative, creative, and rebellious action by making use of the images, texts, and tools of everyday life. Theorists and activists David Garcia and Geert Lovink extended De Certeau's concept of tactics to the field of media activism in their manifesto of tactical media, identifying a class of producers who amplify temporary reversals in the flow of power by exploiting "spaces, channels and platforms'" necessary for their practices. (http://subsol.c3.hu/subsol_2/contributors2/garcia-lovinktext.html).

In this context, the video-makers in this group also employ various "tactics". JAVIN and UPC consider the power of socio-political representation in their videos, but also consider the subverted uses of such representations. The dominant structure of the state and capitalism is critiqued by the use of available transmission channels both within and outside it, whether off-line or online. In addition, the video production used by Gekko Studio, KoPI, and Offstream adopt the popular cinematic approach of the documentary form to mobilise public opinion towards certain issues and influence, not only political decisions, but the processes of decision-making at the highest levels. Their distribution tactics encompass screenings at community sites, as well as festivals, hand-to-hand distribution, local television broadcast, and delivering video by mail to key policy-makers.

This hybrid approach to production and distribution is used to forge participatory communication channels that both challenge and transcend the boundaries of mainstream media hegemony.

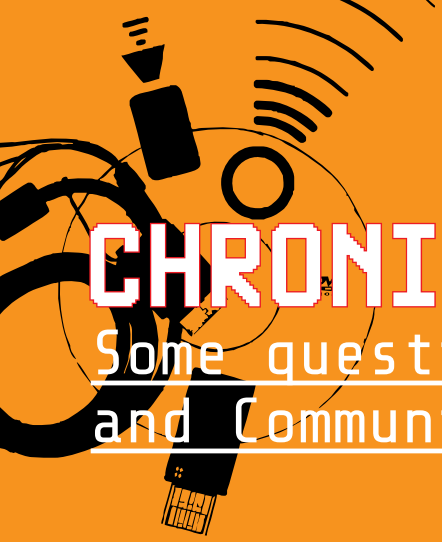
3. Experimental Video Activists

The activists who practise "experimental video" explore the potential of video technology and imagery to transform the relationships between the audience, the producer, and the media. The production of this content has a strong creative element, either because these activists have artistic backgrounds, or because they have developed specific interests in innovative approaches to video. The interweaving of creative, humorous, fictional, and experimental styles is central to these groups because, as well as attempting to demonstrate ways to respond to social issues, these activists also seek to exceed the mainstream/traditional boundaries between media, arts, and society. The works presented

by experimental video activists aim to locate a broad public, encompassing different socio-economic and geographic backgrounds, and take a critical position against the hegemonising power of the media. There is a strong awareness of the inherent qualities of video within each group. Their goals are to do more than inspire change; they mean to intervene in the production and consumption of video as a medium itself.

In this batch is ruangrupa, a Jakarta-based artist initiative founded in early 2000 by Ade Darmawan, Hafiz, Ronny Agustinus, Oky Arfie Hutabarat, Lilia Nursita and Rithmi. The group presents itself as an alternative arts space that also links video practices to visual-arts discourse and urban research and has held the biannual OK.Video festival since 2003. Another "experimental video group" is VideoBabes, formed by Ariani Dharmawan, Prilla Tania and Rani Ravenina: three female video artists who live and work in Bandung, West Java. Aside from creating their own video pieces, the group has responded to the lack of space and infrastructure by facilitating regular video-screening programs with specific themes and open space for discussion. In Semarang, Central Java, Importal works to open alternative public space for a broader range of contemporary visual arts, including video works. Importal's activities include, among others, the launching of a local video compilation that emerged from production workshops, and a screening program called Videoroom and Vidiot festival, which featured video work from Indonesia and the Netherlands. The final group in this category is Forum Lenteng, initiated by Hafiz (who is also a founding member of ruangrupa) in 2003, in the southern outskirts of Jakarta. This group engages youth with experimental video techniques, collaboratively develops audio-visual research methods, and involves communities located at the peripheries of urban centres such as Jakarta and Padang in producing video-based information about their lives through projects such as Videokota, Massroom Project, and Videopoem.

The video experiments conducted by these activists is directed towards the encoding (production) and decoding (consumption) of information by twisting, contradicting, and deconstructing the dominant forms and representations of mainstream media. Fused with the avant-garde arts scene that seeks to change public perceptions of culture, the challenges faced by experimental video activists are not only in making the message itself but also in making the audience more receptive to alternative cultural representations. These challenges are amplified by: (1) a lack of supporting cultural infrastructure (education, funds, government policy); (2) the limitations of Indonesian media literacy and indifference towards genres beyond sinetron, reality TV shows, and infotainment news (celebrity-centred story-telling); and (3) the dominance of mainstream media, which is accepted as the sole source of official information. This leads to experimental media culture being pushed to the margins.



CHRONICLE #1

Some questions on Professionalism and Community

As alluded to in the beginning of the chapter, the categorical definitions in this research are made to help us conceive a preliminary map of video activism in Indonesia. In the interviews conducted, we asked the respondents where their activism fitted in contemporary movements, and received many nuanced reflections. Only a few video activists could give a clear label to their practices, while most located themselves within a diverse range of movements and contexts. Acknowledging the precariousness inherent in assigning unequivocal definitions, here we want to point out the overlapping circuits of video activism that transgress categorical accounts.

The development of a discourse on video-based social practices has been complicated by the definitions of grassroots creators and media professionals (see Kinder: 2008). In some instances, a community video is made entirely by the community members themselves, in other words, "unprofessionally". Meanwhile, video works produced collaboratively by community members and "professional" video-makers are labelled "participatory video", and this is different to what is called "documentary video" on community issues, which is created by outsiders, despite the fact that the video-maker may or may not be a professional.

The incongruity between professional status and everyday activities was also indicative of the self-positioning of "tactical video activists". In our interviews, we found that most of those situated in this category work for reasons that are not purely economic, labelling themselves as "independent video-makers" rather than professional or commercially based. Some informants, such as Maruli Sihombing from UPC, even questioned the idea that being a social justice video-maker is really a profession at all. He reflected, "If we attach the label of 'professional video-maker' to frame our occupation, don't we risk limiting the potency of social movements? After all, the main reason for these activities is to have issues communicated to the public. Video is only one of the options among the many tools available."

Generally speaking, we can say these video-makers, through experience rather than formal education, have acquired skills to a professional level. Their direct approach to video-

making technology, unbridled by the facilitatory function of the community video activists, is an element of their tactical position of making activism part of day-to-day life. While not all the work they do may have the aim of subversive social empowerment (some may indeed be commissioned by commercial interests), it is all viewed as a contribution to the development of a set of skills and a visual language that will in turn inform their own critical responses, i.e. a tactic rather than a compromise.

Another nuanced space is the intersection between artistic exploration and activism, which is often blurred within the context of contemporary video practices in Indonesia, a condition that has been evoked many times in national art history. During the period of "socially engaged arts" in the 1950s and '60s, many "professional" artists encouraged each other to *turun ke bawah* (get down to the grassroots), or *turba* for short. This was particularly evident as the main strategy in arts production of LEKRA (*Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat* – the People's Cultural Institution). Within this principle, although it was considered important, society (*massa* or *rakyat*) was still viewed as a passive subject. The role of art was thus to represent social ills, and the uses of such representations in the circulation of meaning was hardly considered.

The historical trajectory of this relationship to society is still a part of many artistic identities in Indonesia. While many new practices have been introduced to develop different dynamics in cultural production, it is video and digital culture projects that appear to operate on the largest and most intense scale. In the context of video, Forum Lenteng's project of AkuMassa (http://akumassa.org), for example, is an attempt to construct video experiences in local contexts, viewing society as much more than a subject or an audience. While we label this initiative as part of "experimental video activism", these methods strongly overlap with those of community video activists. In many initiatives, the roles of artist and activist coincide to become indistinguishable. For example, artists are involved in non-governmental organisations as facilitators, creative activities are merged with community empowerment programmes, and arts organisations present socio-political video projects as part of their programs.

B. Engaging Video as a Sustainable Medium for Social Change

The mapping of video activism in Indonesia leads to a range of critical reflections on the effectiveness of video itself as a medium for social change. The groups presented here, however, engage video as a medium for social change. That does not stop them from continually questioning the effectiveness of the medium.

Reflecting on Kawanusa's current engagement with video technology, Yoga Atmaja believes video is not the only element in producing social change. According to Yoga, it is still too premature to claim that video has a significant social change impact among grassroots communities. "There are so many other elements that need to be accounted for, such as the role of the state, other power relations, as well as other forces that cannot be overcome just through video advocacy. Sure, some small changes are indeed happening at the village level. But only those which are already within the community's capacity to control, such as building community centers, regulating local village politics and so on. To expect other areas to change as well would be too hasty; there are too many elements at work, and there is no yardstick that can measure how these changes actually occur. Even in our festival, there may be a large audience from outside the village that comes to watch and takes interest in what we do. But once they got home, who can guarantee that they will actually make some changes?"

The last question also brings up the challenge of how video can function as a means of communicating socio-political messages: What kind of representations lead to changes in public opinion? Hafiz from Forum Lenteng, said: "The potential of video as a recording and documenting medium have not yet been fully explored; what we often see now is another form of self-representation, just like watching the usual films". Agus Mediarta of Konfiden further explained that this is partly due to the overt tendency of many video-makers to concentrate on self-representation rather than addressing a public audience. This could be attributed to the euphoria of information production unleashed after the fall of New Order, the prolonged celebration of which risks neglecting the potential for actual changes.

On the other hand, despite rapid innovations in video technology that lower costs and enable higher levels of interaction, for many Indonesians access to such technology remains restricted. Ariani Djalal of Ragam problematised how "the development of community-based video is hampered by access to technology, which is still too expensive for most grassroots communities. This is different to what happens in the use of other media, such as community radio, that continue to be sustained due to their lower cost." With a similar tone, Maruli also attributed the Urban Poor Consortium's careful approach to applying video within their sites of intervention to

the "exclusive" perception of technology that has the potential to produce new conflicts of interest between a new class of community video-makers and other members of the community.

To implement the concept of video as a medium that enables criticism – which is constitutional in the video activists' framework – and to develop it into a tool for critical education, calls for intensified attention to media literacy. The technological gap present in all layers of society that these groups are working with necessitates equally nuanced approaches to media literacy. To lower socio-economic sectors of society, a camera is perceived as a luxury item, which provokes admiration and prestige, or even the illusion that ownership of such sophisticated technology will bring wealth. Indonesian reality shows project the idea that "the poor need to be helped and assisted". This is expressed through mainstream television programs such as *Toloong*, *Bedah Rumah*, or *Uang Kaget*, which have strongly infused the public psychology to undermine marginal communities.

C. Networking Challenges and Collective Action Framework

From the above positions and reflections of video activists in Indonesia, many dynamic production methods, viewing practices and organisational structures can begin to be teased out. The grassroots video activists are fixed in specific sites of intervention where they work and interact with specific communities, while the two latter categories tend to be more mobile and flexible in their interventions. Although some groups adopting video-based approaches are independent entities, many of them are also embedded within other social change organisations that share common visions and agendas. For instance, Gekko Studio collaborates on projects with environmental NGOs, and Etnoreflika has partnerships with organisations assisting marginal communities such as street kids and sex workers.

Some major political differences can also be identified from the distinct approaches of each group. In our focus-group discussion with video activists in Jakarta, Maruli from UPC expressed his concern about community video practices becoming a way of "flirting with new media". He explained that his opinion was borne out of his disappointment in the decision made by one of the community-video organisers implementing a program for a particular traditional community in Java whose environment was at risk due to plans to develop a cement factory nearby. The organisational strategy was to work with the community to produce a video – a process that Maruli considered inappropriate considering the time available to produce a community-based video vis-a-vis the urgency of the situation faced by the community. This situation prompted Maruli to take

his own initiative by making an independent campaign video on the issue so that the information could start to circulate in public and advocacy for the case could be initiated right away. (This video can be viewed at: http://engagemedia.org/Members/maruli/videos/gunungkendheng1.avi/view.)

We raise this example to point out that the steps taken by Maruli and the grassroots video activists he criticises, while different in form, need not be perceived in opposition. The friction between them can be viewed as creating momentum in the same direction; that is, toward the production of information that counters that distributed by the local government and the corporation developing the cement factory.

Conducted simultaneously, video facilitation at a community level, production of socio-political content, and efforts to popularise video-based technologies constitute a new configuration where, collectively, video becomes a means to transform society. The key question is whether the collective activism in this field can sustain the strategic interaction and communication among different factors required to open broader political opportunities: Can video-based activism in Indonesia form a coherent and supportive network? How might online tools be employed to assist in such a formation?

Most of our informants have shown hesitation toward, if not outright rejection of, the idea of working together as a single strategic network. This main reason identified was the limited capacity of groups to function as a network, especially when it comes to the availability of human resources. For example, Yoga Atmaja from Kawanusa pointed to the lack of available staff to open and manage networking activities, as the group is already exhausted by its existing commitments working with communities. More pertinent still are the significant political differences between the various groups. The organisations discussed here are in no way homogenous and run the gamut – from alternative commercial enterprises, to medium-scale NGOs, to all-volunteer radical activist collectives.

Additionally, there are issues of competitiveness and conflicts of interest between both groups and individuals, which has so far often tainted existing networks or led to the disbanding of early network formations. Ultimately, without a shared political vision of what the purpose of such a network would be, it would not be successful. An affinity for the medium of video and a commitment to making the world a better place do not form sufficient basis for the kind of network that could create a movement. While the technologies that enable the easy creation of sophisticated networks are available, it is a common purpose that will provide the basis for the establishment of movement-based networks.

Even so, the activists interviewed do not dismiss the possibility of partnerships with other groups with similar interests. However, how

soon the relationships could be built remains uncertain, as a convincing video-networking model that can inform the activists of how to move forward is yet to appear. The success story of the student movement in toppling the New Order government in 1998, for instance, although organised through networks of disparate groups, is considered by many too fluid to be characterised as an example of an established network.

Networking challenges are also evident within the global social-justice movement, with which many of the groups in this study intersect. As has been argued by Manuel Castells (1997), the global formation of social movements has been profoundly transformed due to the intensification of communication. Traditional movement structures have been abandoned as new information technology allows for resource mobilisation, information-sharing and action-coordination on a larger and faster scale. Furthermore, Jeffrey Juris (2005) notes that the emergence of the cultural logic of networking among global social-justice activists, which is facilitated by digital technologies, not only provides an effective method of social movement organising, but also represents a broader model for creating alternative forms of organisation.

However, the insights of such observers of global internet culture have not yet shed light on how digital-mediated social networking can be appropriated in non-Western countries such as Indonesia, where insufficient technical infrastructure and a range of different cultural backgrounds produce distinct challenges for social movements. Although the underdeveloped internet infrastructure did not hinder the proliferation of political dissent in 1998 Indonesia (Lim, 2003; 2006), the establishment of horizontal networking between activists in the digital sphere to sustain such dissent has not yet manifested, even though the internet infrastructure is now far superior, and much more widespread, than it was in 1998. Bandwidth may still limit the possibilities of video but most other media can take reasonable advantage of the current infrastructure. This lack of networking is indicated by the almost complete lack of hyperlinks between groups surveyed on their respective websites, even though hyperlinks have been available as a technology for more than 15 years. Clearly, the issue is not merely the availability of the tools, but the strategic and imaginative implementation of such. How can an approach to the technology that is more confident, playful, creative and grounded in local contexts be manifested?

In the following chapter we will explore the extent to which off-line and online interactions are related to the formation of networks of video activists in Indonesia, and how these interactions impact on more pragmatic challenges of video distribution.

THE CROSSED LINES OF VIDEO DISTRIBUTION

This chapter examines the current state and future possibilities of activist video distribution channels in the Indonesian context. Whether the responsibility of distribution is assumed by the video-makers themselves, supported by offline programs such as festivals, screenings or exhibitions, based on commercial opportunities, or developed through online channels, the challenges are significant. This discussion is based on the assumption that an established form of independent distribution is yet to be created in Indonesia. The groups in this study view the possibility and necessity of such a model differently, simultaneously inventing new schemes, referring to systems already employed abroad, taking advantage of mainstream screening services, or even choosing not to distribute their work at all. The problem of distribution is inseparable from debates about information ownership, and particularly in the online context, are also linked to the challenges of access to technology. While the ideologies associated with each are interrelated, this chapter divides video distribution into two sets of practices, off-line and online.

A. From Hand to Hand to *Disc Tarra:* Offline Video Distribution

Video activists use various off-line distribution methods to ensure the delivery of their content to the public. Some of the common methods of dissemination are: screening programs, festivals, exhibitions, television broadcasts, home-video distribution and hand-to-hand distribution. Off-line mechanisms are still the most popular in Indonesia for a variety of reasons, which this section explores.

1. Screening Programs

For activists, alternative screening methods outside mainstream venues have been politically as well as practically motivated. As periphery projects, some activists screen the video produced by their constituent communities at a number of sites, whether as indoor events or *layar tancap* (literally, "freestanding screen", quite often an outdoor public screening in a rural or urban area). Kampung Halaman, for example, aside from screening the video works created by the young communities at their site of production, also hold screenings in other villages, commonly followed by public discussions about issues highlighted in the videos. Combine Resource Institution (described in detail in Chronicle #2) also use this method and add an interesting twist. Frequently they download videos from YouTube to use in the screenings, assisting the content off-line and into other spheres.

Others are also adopting similar methods that have proven effective in opening dialogue – not only among, but also between communities. As Yoga Atmaja of Kawanusa explains: "Video becomes a means to connect community members so they can cope with their own issues. They can critically discuss these issues in order to find solutions. At the same time, it also becomes a tool to document the whole problem-solving process, which is then developed as a tool for collective reflection, to determine better ways in taking future actions."

Direct screenings at the community level have also become an option for tactical and experimental video activists in socialising their works. They make screenings at various venues, which become alternatives to commercial cinemas. These include independent cinema houses that determine their own programs, such as Kineforum in Jakarta; Kineruku in Bandung; Kinoki in Yogyakarta; foreign cultural institutions such as French Cultural Centres and the German Goethe Institute; art galleries; campuses; political centres; village halls; or even more privately, among friends in boarding houses or family homes.

One reason attributed to the number and variety of independent screening programs in Indonesia is the slowness of commercial cinema networks (e.g. 21 Group) to adopt digital projection technologies that would allow for the screening of video as well as film. This has meant that video-makers, whether activists or not, have initiated their own screening programs rather than rely on mainstream opportunities.

2. Festivals and Exhibitions

Some of the video activists, such as KoPI, Offstream and VideoBabes, frequently send their work to festivals and exhibitions in Indonesia and overseas. Some groups even hold their own festivals. Kawanusa, for instance, has been organising the Community Video festival in Bali since 2007; Importal in Semarang has run Vidiot since 2006 and ruangrupa in Jakarta has been producing OK.Video biannually since 2003.

Other groups, such as Konfiden, work to promote short film, while In-Docs conduct training and work to promote documentary film through distribution schemes such as festivals and exhibitions that both popularise and archive collections of non-mainstream video works. This agenda is, of course, not without its challenges. As pointed out by Konfiden co-founder Alex Sihar, attempts to develop alternative video distribution through festivals confront a range of issues, from the festival organising structure and censorship, to media literacy and the problem of copyright.

Ade Darmawan, co-founder of ruangrupa, expresses similar concerns. In their efforts to open more exhibition spaces and enable wider public access to videos, ruangrupa faces challenges beyond physical infrastructure, such as the expansion of video literacy through publications, critical investigations, as well as ensuring the sustainability of video production through education and training activities.

There are a very large number of video festivals operating on different levels around the world, and they often form a central focus for video-makers. The focus on this method, however, can limit video-makers' broader approaches to distribution. Online distribution of a video is sometimes an obstacle to being invited to festivals that, even in this age of massive online distribution, will sometimes refuse to screen films that can already be found online.

The possibility of using the net to increase the potential to be noticed and invited to festivals has been used only sparingly. Online distribution of trailers which, given their small size, would well suit the current bandwidth situation in Indonesia, could be used more extensively to promote work to festival organisers, both nationally and internationally.

3. Television Broadcast

Television broadcast as a distribution mechanism of video is not discounted by producers and distributors of non-mainstream videos. In-Doc's Sofia Setyotrini indicated, however, that in documentary film distribution there are considerable obstacles regarding royalty fees for screening on television. National television stations do not provide royalties to independent video-makers because they regard the video material as non-profit in nature, and claim that video-makers should be grateful for the free access they gain to wider audiences. These reasons are accepted by some groups, such as Gekko, which views cooperation with television stations as an effective strategy for broadcasting environmental concerns.

However, as Setyotrini underlined: "Basically television stations everywhere are commercial. Each available time slot is interchangeable with money and commercials. So we can't believe the stations when they claim they are showing video for reasons other than commercial value." Many video activists feel that distributing their work through mainstream and commercial channels undermines the antagonistic nature of their work, though this has a flow-on effect in limiting their distribution.

On the other hand, too much attention to the possibilities of using mainstream television as a distribution mechanism can overlook the potential of alternative channels currently developing on a local level, i.e. the emergence since 2002 of community television stations such as Grabag TV (Central Java), Rajawali TV (Bandung), and Bahurekso TV (East Java) (Hermanto, 2009). Ironically, community television channels have not yet been identified as a means of effective distribution among most video activists, even those working at the community level, though it seems to hold great potential.

Between the ongoing discourses about community television and video activism, there exists some kind of communication gap. On one side, the community TV organisers experience difficulty maintaining consistent programming due to a lack of supply of material; on the other, video-makers claim a lack of channels to distribute their works to the public. The creation of online databases of video content could greatly facilitate interaction between content producers and those running local television stations, particularly if both parties utilised technologies that made it easy to transfer large, high-resolution files, such as FTP and BitTorrent, so those downloaded videos could then be broadcast. Downloading a high-resolution, one-hour video could take a whole day but this is still dramatically faster and cheaper than sending it via post, and there is the added benefit of a searchable database of content.

Given the development of community television in Indonesia is still relatively recent,

its significance to all video activists deserves further study.

4. Sale of Discs

Our discussion of the off-line distribution now moves into more commercial forms, where groups and individuals sell their work in the form of hard-copy DVDs or VCDs. This is the method used by The Marshall Plan, an independent DVD label created specifically for Indonesian alternative films. Apart from creating video compilations, which it distributes through its own networks and screening programs, the group's mission also includes finding new markets for hard copies of independently produced videos.

However, some problems emerge rather quickly with this model. In order to be direct and open in the selling of independent videos in DVD format, the group faces daunting regulations. Dimas Jayasrana of The Marshall Plan explains that in distributing their products to outlet franchises that sell DVDs, such as Disc Tarra, "The DVD products need to have a minimum of 1000 copies, meaning they need to be pressed commercially instead of duplicated on a small scale. Also, the distributor needs to have formal status as a company. All the products need to have an attached tax ribbon issued by the Film Censorship Board." Keeping in mind that anti-censorship is a key feature of an independent video movement, censorship regulations thus become another barrier in circulating alternative video works to the public.

DVD distribution has also been carried out through various initiatives that simply ignore government regulations, such as those of Minikino, Boemboe Forum, HelloMotion, Fourcolourfilms and IVAA (Indonesian Visual Art Archives) (Sihar, 2007). By developing consignment systems with distro (independent music and clothing shops) or other alternative outlets such as bookstores, they are able to supply small amounts of copies according to demand. Given the bureaucratic challenges this model suits the present situation better, however, it isn't necessarily a mechanism for video-makers to support themselves financially.

Another example of off-line distribution is by the arts collective Video Battle in Yogyakarta, which has been disseminating its video compilations as disc sets since 2004. Video Battle selects and compiles five-minute videos from entries of any style in an effort to challenge preconceived "genres". The format used by Video Battle is VCD due to its accessibility and low production cost, which means that the videos, branded in collectable sets, can be sold at low prices. The video-makers selected are encouraged to duplicate and sell copies of the compilation for their own profit. While the VCD distribution Video Battle offer is relatively limited, its open endorsement of duplication has contributed to its recognition, not only

within Indonesia, but also with international audiences, including in Australia and Europe. Recently, the group has also developed an online distribution scheme that will be discussed later in this chapter along with related issues of copyright and the commercialisation of video distribution practices.

5. Hand-to-Hand Distribution

In viewing the structural complexity of mass video distribution in light of their own limited resources, some activists develop distribution models based on personal or institutional relationships. One interesting form this has taken can be seen in the manual distribution methods of Offstream's Lexy J. Rambadetta, who, apart from festival and television distribution, often uses a barter system rather than a monetary exchange for his videos. A standard transaction is one DVD for three packs of mini DV cassettes (equal to 15 cassettes), which Rambadetta is then able to use to produce more work.

Many groups also trade their own videos for those produced by other activists, generating an underground economy that keeps people up-to-date with trends in video content and style. This form of distribution is supported by a range of video library spaces, such as that maintained by VideoBabes' member Ariani Darmawan at Rumah Buku in Bandung, where the public can consistently have access to recently produced work.

While small in scale, these hand-to-hand distribution methods are frequent, common and continue to develop as activists prioritise public access to a range of information. Rather than making them obsolete, online video distribution has the potential to enhance these methods and become part of the infrastructure of such initiatives.

B. Online Distribution: Prospects and Barriers

While there are a great many limitations regarding online video distribution in Indonesia, there are also many exciting prospects. This section looks at the current state of online video distribution by exploring some of the associated technical and cultural issues, and how they are being addressed. We also begin to tease out some of the confusion about licensing, in an effort to develop a future outlook for online video distribution. The possibilities of such will be further explored in the recommendations of the concluding chapter.

1. Technical Contingencies

During the interviews, some video activists stated that they had not yet prioritised online distribution as technical barriers had prevented them

from doing so. Internally, this is often due to a lack of capacity to deal with the overwhelming nature of information technology. To extend their practices to online distribution, these groups need additional resources to develop skills and to manage staff. They also articulated in the interviews the problem of limited bandwidth in Indonesia. For the audience, this often causes an intermittent stream of video that becomes tiresome to watch, and for the producer or distributor, uploading the video takes a very long time, and often fails altogether. This, however, is also reflective of the common approach to video-watching online. While there are myriad forms of online distribution, the user expectation is built around a YouTube-style experience, where the viewer is able to immediately view the video in the browser.

Internet usage in Indonesia has soared in the last decade. Data indicates that from the 1.9 million internet users in 2000, the number inflated to 25 million in 2007, assisted by the flourishing *warnet* (internet cafe) businesses and the deregulation of the 24 GHz band in Indonesia, which lead to the expansion of Wi-Fi access (Prakoso, 2008). Today, in 2009, users may well be up to 30 million. Of these millions of internet-users in Indonesia, however, only 0.08 per cent have home broadband access (Einstein, 2009) due to its relatively high cost. A home connection may cost between 300-800,000 rupiah a month (US$30-US$80), often more expensive than in places such as Australia, where the average income is far greater and internet speeds much faster. Most people access the net through the *warnet* or through cheaper dial-up connections monopolised by the state-owned telecommunication company, Telkom.

It is also important to observe how the internet is used. An article in the national daily Kompas(March, 2009), highlighted a massive survey conducted by Yahoo! and TNS Net Index on urban Indonesian internet users' habits. There emerged several interesting facts, quoted here at length:

> *... As many as 28 percent of urban people have accessed the internet in the last month. 6 percent are accessing the internet on a daily basis. [...] Internet users are not only concentrated in urban areas but spreading in smaller towns as well. [...] Internet café use is the most dominant form of internet access. 83 percent of online users have been to a warnet in the last month. Followed by access from mobile phones, PDA and other mobile devices at 22 percent, office-based usage 19 percent, schools at 17 percent, and access from homes at 16 percent. [...] the majority of internet-based activities are not related to reading news or conducting transactions online. Most users give web-based emails as one of their main activities (59 percent),*

*instant messaging (58 percent), browsing social networking sites (58 percent), search engines (56 percent), and reading online news (47 percent). [...] 6 out of 10 internet users access social networking sites on a monthly basis...(*Internet, Us, and the Future, Amir Sodikin. *Kompas, 27/03/2009)*

Changes to online infrastructure in Indonesia are far too rapid for statistics such as these to be relevant for long. *The Jakarta Post* recently published a story about the Indonesian Government's call for tenders to operate Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave (WiMax), which is "an advanced technology that provides high-throughput broadband connections over long distances without having to build costly infrastructure and large numbers of transmission towers. It also enables lower cost investment and faster access compared to existing 3G technology" ("RI to have WiMax Soon", *The Jakarta Post*, 19/05/2009). The advent of WiMax in Indonesia (which has begun trials but the official roll-out is uncertain) may allow for speeds up to 60Mbps. This would dramatically change the online landscape in Indonesia and directly increase the viability of online video. While the technology is limited at present, both speed and access to the net has the potential to continually improve. Video activists would do well to take full advantage of these future possibilities.

Some groups, such as Konfiden, are attempting to develop opportunities for online video distribution in Indonesia that will employ user-pays systems such as "pay per download" or "pay per view". Alex Sihar of Konfiden is currently establishing a video-sharing space in cooperation with an internet service provider in Indonesia: "The technical provision is still being assessed. We will collaborate with a partner who is one of the key actors in online traffic in Indonesia. I can't say more, as there has yet to be final agreement among us. All I can say is that a special server for video is planned in Indonesia and we have been offered to upload the 1200 videos collected in our database." Two important features of a locally run space would be its ability to adapt to local cultural needs and the development of technical independence.

Other local projects exploring the possibilities of for-profit video include the Beoscope site (beoscope.com), where users pay to upload video. Founded in 2008 as a commercial video-sharing website, the company only has three local commercial competitors: detik.tv, kompas.tv and layartancap.com. The formation of the company was spurred by the popularity of video-sharing services such as YouTube. Adopting the presentation format of television, the company has a subsidy system (revenue received from advertisements or promotional videos, including

political campaigns) for local amateur video-makers. With this strategy, Beoscope expects to boost the production of content from amateur video-makers, and maintain a sustainable business model. The possibility of extending its video-sharing platform to mobile phones is currently being assessed.

Aside from broadband limitations (caused in part by Telkom's monopoly on the telecommunication industry) and the need to lower the cost of internet access, there is also a concern with the ever-increasing size of video files. While it is becoming easier to shoot very high-resolution footage, it is difficult to deliver high-resolution versions of long videos online in Indonesia given the internet speeds. The fragility of Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) as a transfer mechanism also hinders this, with connections often breaking during upload. Both a conceptual and technical change in approach is required: on the technical side, to enable access and develop the skills to use technologies such as BitTorrent and File Transfer Protocol (FTP) for uploading and downloading larger videos; and on the conceptual, or production side, to develop formats orientated towards the web that may be shorter in duration or that focus on the downloading rather than streaming of content.

This issue could also relate to the euphoria that often surrounds video production in Indonesia, which generally celebrates the spirit of do-it-yourself video-making, meaning *how* the work is going to be watched is often last on the video-maker's agenda. According to Hafiz of Forum Lenteng, this condition is symptomatic of a society that has only recently been liberated from a regime that strongly hegemonised information-production processes. He adds that attempts by community members to stream these activities towards more socially constructive practices are also increasing. On the other hand, Ade Darmawan from ruangrupa points out that the limitations of online formats could actually inspire video-makers to explore new ways to create video content that is specific to an online viewing experience.

As these comments illustrate, new approaches are vital; the technologies can be harnessed if the creativity exists.

2. Cultural Resistance and the 'Digital Divide'

The tentativeness towards online video distribution can, in some cases, be attributed to tactics, especially among grassroots video activists, to prioritise off-line connections. For many, the main concern is to have the video works collectively appreciated at the sites where they are made. They tend to work on screenings at a community level or directed to particular sectors of society, rather than a general online audience.

The disinclination of some towards online distribution could also be linked to perceptions regarding the rise of internet technology. For example, Kampung Halaman co-founder Dian Herdiany describes how, in certain cases, members of the community (especially parents) refused Kampung Halaman's proposal to install internet facilities in their village, citing the risk of exposure to pornographic materials. In this instance, the moral panic saturating national debates about the internet had also influenced local communities. Kampung Halaman responded by withdrawing the plan, allocating funds to youths interested in renting hours at a *warnet* in the adjacent city.

This case illustrates the difficulty in working across a wide spectrum of internet literacy. The gaps between those who are constantly exposed to the internet (activists, NGO workers, media professionals) and those who are not creates a cultural chasm; a local manifestation of what has been globally coined "the digital divide" (Gunkel, 2003). Despite the celebratory accounts of a global technology revolution, some local video activists respond quite critically to the prospect of online distribution. In the words of Yoga from Kawanusa: "Video distribution is prioritised among community members for its 'ceremonial' aspects; to achieve public recognition of their work. They want their videos to be launched at an event attended by people they know. We are talking about people living in the villages. They don't have access to the internet, and perhaps they don't need to have any. Why publish the videos online if they don't know who is accessing them? If we insist on doing so, who will actually benefit? Of course, the answer is: those who are already literate. They are the ones who savour the surplus in knowledge. The unequal access to information technology can, in turn, establish new power relations between information haves and have-nots."

Various critiques (Gunkel, 2003; Sassi, 2005) regarding the risk of social divisions reproduced by knowledge-power relations, point out that multifaceted issues other than technically determined factors need to be considered in attempts to democratise video for social change. Aspects such as the society's cultural readiness to interact with new media, the divergent economic settings of grassroots communities, and the various desires and approaches to consuming information are some of the issues that cannot be addressed simply by procurement of media technology or technical-content training. New media require advanced strategic applications and deconstructions.

The lessons from Indonesia about the internet and political change discussed in Chapter 2 have told us that the fluidity and flexibility of technology use are instrumental to the various forms of identity coalitions and movements. This has not only enabled empowerment and

democratisation, but has also served in the reproduction of dominance and exclusion such as promoted by religious fundamentalist groups (Lim, 2006). Along with these trajectories, which are certainly incongruent to the goals of activists discussed in this research, we can also anticipate increasingly banal content flooding the internet. The ubiquity of mainstream video-sharing services such as YouTube, Facebook etc., and the rapid spread of 3G-based video on mobile phones, has become an arena so extensive that social-justice and environmental video content is outshone by these terabytes of information. Posting work online is not enough for activist content; an audience must then view it and then ideally take some form of action.

Many of the online videos that grab public attention are those that expose footage of corruption and dirty politics, violence and pornography. On one side, this new media landscape has been made manifest in the digital convergence currently prevailing in which "amateur"video agencies, including forms of citizen journalism, increasingly flow across media, ranging from television and mobile phones, to the internet. On the other hand, the forms, themes and content of these flows quickly become limited – if not homogenous – as the expectation for immediacy and the available technological features shape them. Through new distribution models, activists propose to punctuate these flows of amateur videos with social-change content that already exists in off-line forms so that audiences can become more receptive to the diverse range of video works available.

Regarding the issue of audience receptiveness to information through online video, Ade Darmawan and Ardi Yunanto from ruangrupa called for more advanced strategies in designing online video interfaces, such as employing what they call a "curatorial logic": "Basically, online video sharing channels need to provide clearer frameworks to assist the audience in contextualising the work being presented. Given the immensity of content flooding the internet nowadays, how are we going to attract audiences relevant to specific topics presented in the videos? If there is no curatorial explanation, I think there won't be much difference in the experience from watching YouTube."

In addition to the need to democratise access through structural provisions, it is clear that strategies are required to address the particular cultural characteristics of the internet in order to not only open, but also enable equal public participation. One thing lacking is a local, successful example of online distribution being used to garner a wide audience or to generate real world change, an example that others could find convincing and worth replicating.

3. The Current State of Online Video in Indonesia

The previous sections have discussed some of the technical and socio-cultural barriers characteristic of online video distribution in Indonesia, as well as its economic prospects. So how are current practices addressing those barriers? As far as having an online presence, almost all the groups represented in the research have their own website, and some use video-sharing applications to stream their work on those sites. Most video activists interviewed also use social-networking sites and upload content to existing online video-sharing sites such as YouTube, DailyMotion and Multiply. In daily routines, these groups also communicate through email, instant messaging, mailing lists, and forums as well as publishing weblogs. Groups who upload videos onto their own and/or other video-sharing websites are Kampung Halaman, Etnoreflika, Ragam, Gekko Studio, Offstream, Javin, UPC, and Forum Lenteng. Also emerging are online video sharing spaces with an Indonesian presence such as Beoscope, Video Battle, and EngageMedia. Some of the groups engaged in distribution and production, such as Konfiden and In-Docs, also complement their sites with database services containing information on different local videos they have collected and details on how to access them.

Even within these commonalities of internet usage, each group generates different cultural practices. To the grassroots video activist embedded in local communities, resource mobilisations are focused on community empowerment. Even though the groups integrate information and communication technology into their daily activism, the basis of their interaction with communities is often based on face-to-face contact. Therefore, the distribution of the videos produced tends to also be through physical means. To realise the goals of online distribution requires additional support and access to hubs that would enable ongoing connections between the communities and diverse networks of global social movements.

For tactical video activists, online distribution is seen as one of the many ways to launch their content publicly. Aware of the multiple barriers to reach audiences in Indonesia, activists such as Rizky from Gekko Studio, Fendry and Rahung from JAVIN, Maruli from UPC, as well as Lexy from Offstream, turn to internet distribution to target audiences in other parts of the world. By uploading their work to their own websites or video services, whether on general-use sites such as YouTube, DailyMotion or specific ones such as EngageMedia, they remain optimistic about the available channels to garner international solidarity on the issues presented in their works. Moreover, these activists, as explained by Rahung of JAVIN, believe that in disseminating their videos to global audience, there is an

increase in opportunities to gain resources for ongoing production of social-justice videos.

Online distribution is strategically adopted by some experimental video activists since they view distribution processes (both off-line and online) as yet another form of media interaction with which to experiment. Forum Lenteng, for instance, encourages the community of participants from the Akumassa project to embed their video in a dedicated blog and to add comments and notes to encourage discussion about the content. Ruangrupa now provides videos from the OK.Video festival online through their own website and the EngageMedia site.

For online video-sharing services, several new distribution schemes are being developed. In the case of Beoscope, the future of the company relies on the progress of amateur video production. Unlike established global platforms such as YouTube or DailyMotion, which provide little encouragement in return for enthusiastic and voluntary uploads, Beoscope undertakes off-line activities similar to activist groups, such as organising video-production workshops for beginners. In addition, Beoscope assists those unable to upload video directly on the web by arranging the physical or postal delivery of video. This points again to the need for additional training and also mechanisms to overcome the bandwidth limitations.

In Yogyakarta, Video Battle is developing online methods to expand the distribution of their compilations as one solution to the difficulties they experienced in off-line distribution and to encourage more video art productions. Video Battle is very optimistic about online distribution. It has created a video subscription channel enabling video podcasting in Miro and iTunes, as well as the ability to watch Flash video versions directly from their website (http://video-battle.net).

As the last example here, we look at the practices of EngageMedia, co-authors of this research and one of the "new players" in online video distribution in Indonesia. EngageMedia originates in Australia; however, it also has Indonesian bases in Jakarta and Yogyakarta. The primary focus of EngageMedia's activities is the EngageMedia.org video-sharing site. All videos on the site use open-content licenses and downloading for off-line redistribution is encouraged. A key tactic is to explore how online distribution can work in low-bandwidth situations.

With this in mind, EngageMedia has set up a series of local archives using Plumi, an open source video-sharing platform. The archives run on a server hosted locally in the office of the organisation, making uploading and downloading to the archive extremely rapid. Videos can be watched by anyone on the local area network and easily copied to USB sticks, DVDs and CDs. Here, all the benefits of a

database and digital storage can be manifested and the participating organisations (Kampung Halaman, Indonesian Visual Art Archive, Combine Resource Institution, and Ruangrupa) increase their technical skills and become "online ready" as bandwidth improves.

Additionally, EngageMedia is running approximately 20 workshops in Indonesia over the course of three years to improve the digital-distribution skills of video activists. The steps taken by EngageMedia are ways to address the technical and skills barriers faced by social-justice video activists. In this period of transition from off-line to online distribution, off-line support for online work is crucial in responding to the current challenges.

C. Negotiating Rights

Addressing rights over content is raised often in discussions about both off-line and online video distribution. Video activists are often stumped over the unclear legal regulations of copyright, distribution rights and screening rights in Indonesia, particularly as the distinction between individual and collective production is frequently blurred in the context of activist videos, which can complicate the attribution of ownership, which is necessary to negotiating such rights. There appears to be three main approaches to negotiating rights within the groups featured in this research: ignoring the issue of copyright (piracy), adopting open-content licensing forms such as Creative Commons, and local initiatives to create new open licensing models.

1. Definitions

In general, the complexity of responses to intellectual property rights exist within a set of general understandings of copyright as the norm, copyleft as its counter paradigm, and other licensing forms currently thriving in the digital scene (such as Creative Commons) as possible alternatives. The following are some definitions (from http://en.wikipedia.org) of the aforementioned terms:

> **Copyright:** the internationally standardised system giving the author of an original work exclusive rights for a certain time period in relation to that work, including its publication, distribution and adaptation, after which time the work is said to enter the public domain. Copyright is described under the umbrella term "intellectual property", along with patents and trademarks. Most jurisdictions recognise copyright in any completed work, without formal registration.
> **Copyleft:** a play on the word copyright to describe the practice of using copyright law to remove restrictions on distributing copies and

modified versions of a work for others and requiring that the same freedoms be preserved in modified versions. Copyleft is a form of licensing and can be used to modify copyrights for works such as computer software, documents, music and art, giving, for instance, every person who receives a copy of a work permission to reproduce, adapt or distribute the work as long as any resulting copies or adaptations are also bound by the same copyleft licensing scheme.
Creative Commons: several copyright licenses first released on December 16, 2002 by Creative Commons, a US non-profit corporation founded in 2001. Creative Commons licenses help authors share their work while keeping their copyright and specifying certain conditions. Creative Commons licenses are currently available in 43 different jurisdictions worldwide, with more than 19 others under development.

In an Asian – and particularly Indonesian – context, however, such neat definitions do not help much in explaining all the problems that producers and distributors face in adhering to, or rejecting, any of the available options. While discussions of intellectual property have escalated in keeping within the upsurge of the digital content, another way to embark on this discussion in the local terrain deals with a contexts that are neither strictly legal, nor dealing with information. It is by raising these examples of property ownership conflicts that different perspectives can be understood. Following the cultural routes to the definitions of property in Indonesia's past and present, one often encounters (1) historical accounts of the management of tangible property, particularly land; (2) the ever-dispersing cultural products that flow across cultures and geographic locations; and (3) the massive informal flow in "Asian" knowledge production (Liang et al., 2009). Indeed, this critical invocation might easily fall into the trap of a crude cultural relativism on "Asian values", which reifies the exhaustive tension between the West and the East. But echoing the words of Liang et al. in his collective monograph *How Does an Asian Commons Mean*, by attending to local historical tensions in reading today's ambivalent responses to property issues, more intelligible alternatives can be generated, including by video activists.

The questions of land, forest and natural resources management that evolved from pre-colonial (Lombard, 1990) to modern times (see Tsing, 2005; for in-depth discussion on this particular issue) in different local contexts across what is now Indonesia, have experienced perpetual collision between notions of private and public (common) property, enabling modes of property acquisition beyond legal definitions. This has often manifested in violence, involving the dispossession by those in power, through

the enforcement of property regimes as well as corrupt and militant practices, of marginal communities that had been nurturing a sense of belonging to certain lived, common grounds (such as forests, city public spaces, "wastelands" etc.).

The living practices of the commons can also be traced from the disordered flow of literatures, folklores, performances and other cultural products to its most recent digital form. One example regards the intensifying conflict between Indonesia and Malaysia, which both claim exclusively as their national heritage, what are actually shared cultural products and practices, such as the *kebaya*, a type of dress, and *dangdut*, a music and performance style. This situation points to the intricacy, if not impossibility, of circumscribing the boundaries of culture under the terms of intellectual property. The free movement of cultural artefacts in Asia can also be situated within copy-culture and non-legal distribution networks (such as piracy). These operate as modes that enable knowledge production in space dominated by a scarcity of access to such resources.

These historical and cultural readings of the local trajectories of the commons help in understanding the confusion surrounding property rights in modern Indonesia, pointing to the way legal definitions often fail to translate the diversity of practices into practical terms. We will examine how this gap continues to loom over video activists' decisions to appropriate normative as well as alternative property rules in distribution. We will also explore links between distribution patterns and also piracy as a rising mode of knowledge production.

2. Current approaches to Licensing

In our interview with Wok the Rock of Video Battle, he strongly criticised the implementation of systems of intellectual property rights that regulate ownership, as he feels these powerful mechanisms overstate the distinct position between those claimed as key cultural producers and those who are weaker and functioning as consumers of culture. In Bandung, KoPI permits any form of copying of their work by tagging their DVDs with copyleft labels as part of their viral distribution scheme. On the opposite pole, there are some groups, such as Gekko Studio and Beoscope, which uphold traditional copyright approaches Yoga from Kawanusa stated that he does not want bother with ownership rights and leaves other stakeholders to arrange it if it is important to them. Within this spectrum of responses, many are looking for alternative forms to the existing copyright system that still protect the rights of video-makers. Konfiden, for instance, came up with its own rights management scheme, which it called

"cultural rights". According to Alex of Konfiden, this was established so that video-makers can understand their rights without having to submit to the mainstream copyright regime. Without major backing, however, it will be difficult to get an entirely new rights initiative up from scratch, particularly one a critical mass of people will agree on.

An alternative licensing scheme that already exists internationally is Creative Commons. Creative Commons is already quite accepted among certain digital-based information producers in Indonesia, including many bloggers and website administrators such as yesnowave.com, kunci.or.id, and videobattle.org. As EngageMedia requires the use of Creative Commons licenses, Forum Lenteng, ruangrupa, Kampung Halaman and any group or activist that is uploading to their site is also already using them, though perhaps often without the full knowledge of its implications.

In discussions regarding copyright and licensing among community video-makers in Indonesia, Creative Commons is brought up as a possibility. Several organisations are questioning how they can share content in a different way that is more in tune with their political aims. For Kampung Halaman, the increasing demand from commercial video sites for participatory videos prompted a focus-group discussion in December 2008 to discuss the possibility of legally employing Creative Commons in Indonesia. Creative Commons has not yet been ported to Indonesian law, though there are groups working toward this.

One problem raised with Creative Commons is that it is seen as being imposed from outside, which has made it less appealing to many of the research subjects. Another key limitation is that it brings the system of copyright with it, relying heavily on an established legal framework, which Indonesia lacks. Video producers, distributors and consumers have also raised concerns about the scope of rights covered by Creative Commons. For example, Dimas Jayasrana of The Marshall Plan questions the scope of non-commercial attribution mechanisms specified by Creative Commons licensing: "The confusion between commercial and non-commercial schemes is surfacing in some specific cases. Let's say that a certain festival is screening a video, free of charge. But at the same time, the festival itself received two billion rupiah cash funds by global multinational corporations. So does it still fall under the non-commercial attribution clause? What if a video work is screened in the lounge of a commercial cinema house like Blitz? Of course it would be free of charge, but then again is not Blitz itself a commercial space? So, I think to have a clearer separation between what is commercial and not, we have to consider all the components and different contexts."

Such confusion may arise from the fact that there seems to be no clear explanation of how Creative Commons works in Indonesian. Copyleft is often popularly interpreted as being in the public domain (i.e. no copyright) but copyleft is actually based on copyright. While the intention may be open licensing, its implementation is often vague. Clarifying how alternatives could work in the public domain would be an obvious first step to improving the uptake of such a licensing scheme. The role of Creative Commons, or any other alternative licensing scheme, must be viewed as a re-establishment of interactivity and communication between creators and users, not merely a replacement of the current copyright system.

In the future debates around copyright issues will intensify, hopefully encouraging the development of open-content practices in the digital fields that can coexist with collective cultural production methods. As licensing affects greatly how content can be distributed, effective distribution in a digital age requires alternatives to traditional copyright.

3. Issues around Piracy

As well as collective production, copying and reusing are common practices that have lead to the establishment of "piracy" as a local mode of knowledge production and distribution in Indonesia (Juliastuti, 2008). Under the ambiguous radar of the Indonesian legal system, piracy of video content has grown to become an important sector of the economy where businesses based on piracy and those based on "legitimate" practices build an interdependent relationship. In the context of many Asian societies, Indian media observer Ravi Sundaram (2001: 93-99) argues that there is a certain "readiness for piracy: the power to create new techniques which is 'partly done through breaking the laws of global electronic capital', consuming pirated products and creating supporting infrastructure with strong 'non legality' character".

There are more than just a few players benefiting from the rampant piracy of video content in Indonesia. Besides commercial distributors, many independent film-makers "borrow" footage or techniques from bootlegged VCD/ DVD films. Since its inception, Video Battle has encouraged their video compilations (which often include videos that have directly appropriated copyrighted material) to be freely copied. Ruangrupa branded their 2005 OK.Video festival with the theme "piracy" as a way to reconsider piracy as a form of subversion. But how can piracy networks be harnessed for the distribution of social-change video? Recently, piracy has been espoused by some video activists as being to the expansion of off-line distribution channels. The viewing of pirated activist videos is still limited to the fringes

of society compared to the mass piracy of commercial film and music in Indonesia, and no successful example is yet to be found.

Some argue that piracy deters sustained plans for the commercial, or sustainable, distribution of alternative video, as for alternative video consumers piracy is already the norm. Another consideration is that if distribution occurs through piracy, it is impossible to measure either the quantity or character of audiences.

The technical, cultural, and legal challenges discussed in this chapter are just some of the issues impacting the many methods of distribution demonstrated by the groups in this research. One of the commonalities between the projects discussed in Chapter 2 and their distribution systems, discussed in this chapter, is that both explore new terrain for the groups and communities involved. Further investigation is required into how these commonalities can become productive in order to sustain the goals of democratic media production. The next chapter draws some conclusions and makes several recommendations on the further development of activist online video distribution methods.

CHRONIC #2

Online Radio Activism: A Look at Combine

A sustained online distribution network, although not specifically based on video technology, has already been put in place by the media activist group Combine Resource Institution (Community-Based Information Network). Founded in 2000 and based in Yogyakarta, Combine's activities include the mobilisation of content-production and exchange among its constituent communities through printed media, video, radio and digital technology as a solution to the challenge of distribution at a local level. Combine's decision to create an online community radio network was sparked by the awareness that the internet was a suitable technology for connecting the communication nodes evolving at its sites of intervention. Their online distribution strategy tends to be organic. It is not formed to create centralised lines of communication and information production, but, instead, to disperse and disseminate the process and products along multiple horizontal routes. In practice, the scheme included activities such as information/content exchanges (ranging from community development, disaster risk reduction and political education, to daily entertainment) for different community radio groups, as well as the provision of audio webcasting.

Different subjects identify different values from such initiatives. Combine's actions reveal a continuous trajectory rooted in the demands of producing resource-efficient information transmission. In other words, Combine sees online distribution as a logical response to people's need for information. They are supported by their more flexible positioning as "general" media activists, in which radio fills one of the many possible media that it has developed, and also by the fact that they have many people with technical skills at their disposal, which most of the video groups researched do not. Combine is ready to adopt video, printed media or other forms as long as the technology applied is beneficial to the assisted communities.

The freedom to move across media channels is perhaps something that other groups could not afford to do due to their initial foundation in video-based practices. Combine's grassroots constituents can more easily use radio in their projects than cameras and other video equipment, which tend to be more expensive and require more skills. Audio files also have the advantage of being much smaller than video files and therefore easier to distribute online. Combine's director, Akhmad Nasir, explained that the group's main aim is to "prepare community members to become media activists themselves, it is through them that efforts for social transformation can be optimised". The expansion of their networks to digital platforms is the initiative of community members themselves, arising from the knowledge that a low-cost and effective technology is required to connect the established communicational hubs.

Their growth into online radio formats shows that online media networks do not necessarily lead to exclusivity, but can amplify the potential of tools for civil empowerment. As Combine moves increasingly into the realm of video, it may be the most well placed to leverage the move online and be a significant hub in any future network.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Summary

This research began with a number of questions about the relationship between the current state of video activism and the possibilities of digital video distribution in Indonesia. One of the primary goals was to identify the potential of online distribution to enhance the social-change work of Indonesian video activists and campaigners working on issues of the environment, human rights, queer and gender issues, cultural pluralism, militarism, poverty, labour rights, globalisation, and more.

Chapter 2 provided the historical overview necessary to begin mapping the current state of video activism in Indonesia. Specifically, it showed that particular patterns of video consumption in broader Indonesian society are related to how technologies such as VCD have dominated video production and distribution. It also argued that the historical moment at the end of the New Order led to a remarkable embracing of the democratising power of media technologies for Indonesian activists, the trajectory of which can still be seen in the practices of activists today.

Mapping these practices was the focus of Chapter 3, a visual representation of which can be found in the centre of our publication. The analyses we made of different types of video activism (grassroots, tactical, and experimental) illustrated how the structures of the post-1998 social

movements in Indonesia are shaping, and are shaped by, the development of video and online technology. This chapter also raised some of the broader concerns activists have about how, and to what extent, video can be engaged as a social change tool. We looked at how video-based knowledge has been both produced and appropriated for activist purposes, drawing on several specific examples from our informants.

Chapter 4 detailed how video is currently being distributed by the key actors identified in Chapter 3, first through off-line methods, and secondly, in terms of the burgeoning internet space in Indonesia. This section identified many limitations regarding online video distribution in Indonesia; a lack of skills; a lack of a network to build a common vision and aggregate the necessary social and technical resources; a lack of infrastructure – both from a bandwidth perspective and also regarding access to technologies or production and distribution; confusion about licensing; cultural resistance to the online realm; and organisational sustainability.

What emerged from this complex map was a range of models of video-based social movements with diverse and hybrid approaches to distribution of their content. These observations have informed recommendations of how these approaches could be developed into strategies for further engagement with local, national, and global audiences.

B. Recommendations

Acknowledging the diverse range of approaches that come under the umbrella of video activism, our recommendations primarily concern opening spaces for networks to develop between existing groups and individuals working in the field. We strongly believe that in addressing the limitations that have been identified throughout this report, it is most important to encourage communication and mutual support between groups, particularly through developing skills and knowledge and access to technology.

A foundation of this development is the understanding that it is, in fact, differences in approach that will help rather than hinder the development of digital distribution methods that are appropriate to the Indonesian context. We present our recommendations in terms of further research required, a continuity of the critical approaches to technology we have identified, a logic of video-activist networking, and the future of online distribution.

1. Further Research

This research has not had the scope to adequately cover all the subjects necessary for a comprehensive thesis on video activism and video distribution in Indonesia. Of course, we have asked many more questions than we can answer. We would love to see this project inspire a continuation of research and analysis, particularly including other provinces of Indonesia beyond Java and Bali, and other video activist initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region.

A more specific topic arising from our research regards the issue of content licensing in Indonesia. The technical contingencies of, and cultural resistance to, online distribution methods among activists raised several questions related to copyright and piracy, which we began to address in Chapter 4. It quickly became clear, however, that this was s topic that requires deeper investigation. As copyright laws begin to be enforced in Indonesia, activists need to know more about alternatives such as Creative Commons. As increased online distribution means their content engages more global audiences, it will no longer be enough to simply ignore issues of copyright. How Creative Commons or any alternative to international copyright law could be developed into a robust system in an Indonesian context, and how such rights would be negotiated in a climate of widespread piracy, are questions that remain unanswered.

On a related tangent, existing commercial piracy networks may be an untapped space for activist video distribution. These networks currently have the best off-line distribution of film and video in the country, and they are moving increasingly into diskless formats; it is now possible to go to some piracy markets with a USB stick and directly make copies of hundreds videos from a computer. While it could be wishful thinking that such networks would want to distribute activist content, further research is required into the nature of those networks and the willingness of pirate distributors to work with activists. Despite their illegality, these networks serve as a model of distribution worthy of further research.

Another field of research related to online video distribution is how mobile phone technology is changing the ways people record, send and receive video files. Whether activists are currently using these technologies and how inclusive they are of the many sectors of society that form their target audiences are areas still to be explored. Other areas that also need to be addressed concern gender, class and ethnicity. Does the adoption of particular media technologies – for example, online video distribution – encourage or challenge existing stereotypes and power relations? A

related but broader extension of this research is how the choice of different distribution methods modifies the political aims of activist organisations, and ultimately, how those aims may be augmented to include media democracy.

2. Continuing the Critical Approach to Technology

Throughout this research, activists have expressed a diverse range of opinions on the interrelatedness of technology and the social-change movements of which they are part. Generally, there have been critical approaches to both video production and distribution technologies. We view these critical approaches as essential to the process of not only adopting, but also adapting these technologies to local contexts in ways that are both effective and sustainable.

At an off-line level, the research has shown how video activists are continuously attempting diverse distribution schemes, ranging from festival organising, direct screenings in villages and public venues programmed with discussions, to hand-to-hand exchanges of video files. Even while they address the challenges of these off-line distribution methodologies, video activists such as Video Battle, Gekko Studio, Javin, Forum Lenteng, UPC and many others are already engaging critically with the internet as a form of distribution.

Meanwhile, many grassroots video activists harbour reservations about new internet technologies. Their attitudes do, however, show a willingness to use such technologies if they can be employed suitably for their political projects. Activists' investment (or divestment) in particular technologies are not determined solely by their novelty, but by critical reflections about which options are most compatible with their goals. This critical approach is vital in formulating effective responses to technology, which are rightly seen as a set of tools with certain social and political potentialities, and obvious limitations also.

The interplay between new distribution methods, social agency, and commercial potential will continuously expand as infrastructures in Indonesia develop through private and market-driven initiatives. As previously explained, enthusiasm is the response of some activists such as Konfiden, which plans to adopt a commercial scheme for online video distribution. On the other hand, we have seen a resistance from some groups towards online distribution on the basis of a perceived incompatibility with their need to generate income. For example, some producers feel that providing video for free online means people won't buy the DVD or VCD. While we acknowledge these concerns, we also encourage a critical and creative approach to how technology can improve commercial distribution. Online distribution, in fact, can be used as a way

to promote the purchase of hard copies. Low-resolution versions or short trailers can be placed online and the option to purchase a hard copy or download the full version made available. Such distribution could allow for greater international exposure and even access to festivals and broadcast opportunities outside of Indonesia. Online distribution also saves on postage and printing and provides a means for people to help distribute and promote both their and other peoples' work, as it makes it easier to forward on.

One issue that emerged repeatedly in our research, as well as the work of others, is bandwidth. Many activists see access to bandwidth as a kind of currency which privileges those living in urban centres while making online distributing or viewing of video impossible for many others. It is important to think about the limitations people have in terms of uploading and viewing videos online but, at the same time, these limitations are sometimes overplayed. Some activists appear blinkered regarding the possibilities of more creative approaches to the technology. Moving beyond conceiving of online video as solely a "YouTube-style experience", in which videos are streamed directly to the individual online user, requiring high bandwidth and fast computer processors, is an important part of getting the most out of the possibilities of online distribution. For example, different approaches that encourage downloading materials for copying onto off-line media such as USB, DVD and CD would be helpful. There are also many tools available, such as FTP and BitTorrent, that support the uploading and downloading of large files over slow internet connections. Additionally, downloaded content can often be viewed at a higher quality and without waiting for the constant buffering of Flash video.

Other avenues beyond a purely web-based model are available. For example, off-line video repositories could be created, which would make use of hubs with fast internet connections, making local copies of thousands of videos that could then be shared off-line, again via USB, DVD, CD. The adoption of these tools and methods requires more training in distribution skills and more opportunities for technologists and video-makers to be brought together to work on common projects, whether face-to-face or online. Networks of support and collaboration across fields as well as systems of peer learning need to be developed.

3. Towards a Logic of Video Activist Networking

For various reasons explored in Chapter 3 and 4, none of the groups presented in this research work together as a horizontal network, either online or off-line, in more than an informal sense. However, each set of video activists has formed a basis of collective action. It is our thinking that if this collective framework could be harnessed to form a

coherent network, the chance to create changes in the public sphere, or even at a structural level would be greatly increased. This section continues the discussions around networking challenges and collective action frameworks brought up in Chapter 3, Section B, by making some recommendations about the formation of such a network, both for the purpose of video distribution and for the sharing of skills and knowledge.

Although we are fully aware that working as a network does not guarantee a smooth process free from tensions and conflicts, we do think that both existing and new networks could be directed towards mobilising resources to respond to the variety of obstacles to the production and distribution of video content. However, the fact that the technology exists and certain groups have an affinity for video is not enough to form effective networks. Networks must begin from common political goals and shared understandings, some of which we hope have been identified through this research. Online distribution tools and communication spaces can be an effective means to create network constellations, to form common identities and build collective endeavors that create the foundations for stronger movements towards social change.

Concerns over the lack of an effective model became one of the main obstacles in translating the existing local frameworks into a network of movements. Ade Darmawan of ruangrupa, for instance, has qualms about the idea of realising a digitally based network without more groundwork, especially considering how new virtual communication is in comparison with traditional patterns. This conclusion clashes with theories such as those of Manuel Castells's (1996; 1997) or Jeffrey Juris's (2004; 2005), which show the internet to be exactly the tool to facilitate the formation of a networking structure that supports a horizontal organisational logic. To argue about which one comes first, off-line or online development, would throw us back to the classic dispute about eggs and chickens. We feel that different technological applications, as described in Chapter 4, need not be framed in a substituting relationship, as more often that not, they can complement each other.

An interesting a comparison is the Indymedia experiments (Juris, 2005; Pickard, 2006), which have been emblematic of the effective configuration of a wide-reaching social-justice network through digital technology that complements and contributes to movement work as a whole. The Indymedia experiences of networking at a global level have demonstrated digital repertoires of participatory principles, independent infrastructures, open-content and resource-sharing that have radically contributed to the strengthening and informing of movements on the ground. How can we

learn from the successes and failures of these previous attempts and create future iterations of effective networking in Indonesia and beyond?

Networks are needed both to enable people to come together to overcome many of the obstacles discussed, but also as a strategic end in themselves. The networking framework can allow for diverse distribution modes that effectively respond to burgeoning forms of media convergence and the different capacities of participating groups and individuals. Networks should encourage the sharing of knowledge and skills, the development of shared aims, the pooling of resources to enhance the effectiveness of political formations and to apply political pressure to achieve improved social or environmental conditions. In that sense, networks are both the outcome of improved communications and political effectiveness and also the necessity for them.

A network of video-makers might enable the creation of a locally managed activist video sharing space that might prove more responsive to local needs than the variety of international options and commercially orientated spaces. These possibilities will be explored as the experiences and insights of those experimenting with online spaces and their networking potential grow.

4. The Future of Online Video Distribution

We view a strategic and tactical approach to online video distribution as a way for video activists to move toward the logic of networking discussed above, while maintaining a critical approach to technology. As the groups described in this research continue their important work of using video as means of addressing social justice, human rights, cultural and environmental issues, online distribution of that video will undoubtedly be part of their future. The last 10 years have shown that adjusting to internet-distribution models, for politicians, creative industries and mainstream media, among others, is absolutely necessary to establish and maintain a global and local presence. We believe the same to be true for activists. Neither one single approach to the internet, nor the creation of a single network, will improve the distribution and effectiveness of activist video in Indonesia.

Success lies in each group strategically seizing the tools to build new models and possibilities according to their own goals for social change. We hope this future includes the creation of common infrastructure, more video being shared online, the generation of new distribution methods, the continued sharing of skills and knowledge of video technologies, and ultimately, broad advances in social justice, human rights and the repair of an ever more fragile environment.

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Date

list of interview

Akhmad Nasir (Combine)
6 Januari 2009

Dian Herdiany + Sisilia Maharani
(Kampung Halaman),
7 Januari 2009

Wimo A. Bayang (Video Battle)
8 Januari 2009

Budi Satriawan + Agus Nur Prabowo
(Etnoreflika)
9 Januari 2009

Hafiz (Forum Lenteng)
12 Januari 2009

Lexy Rambadetta (Offstream)
12 Januari 2009

Alex Sihar + Agus Mediarta (Konfiden)
13 Januari 2009

Sofia Setyorini + Mia Indreswari
(InDocs)
13 Januari 2009

Ade Darmawan + Ardi Yunanto
(ruangrupa)
13 Januari 2009

Ridzki R. Sigit (Gekko Studio)
15 Januari 2009

Dimas Jayasrana + Lintang
(The Marshall Plan)
16 Januari 2009

Ariani Dharmawan (VideoBabes)
17 Januari 2009

Wimo A. Bayang (Video Battle)
20 Januari 2009

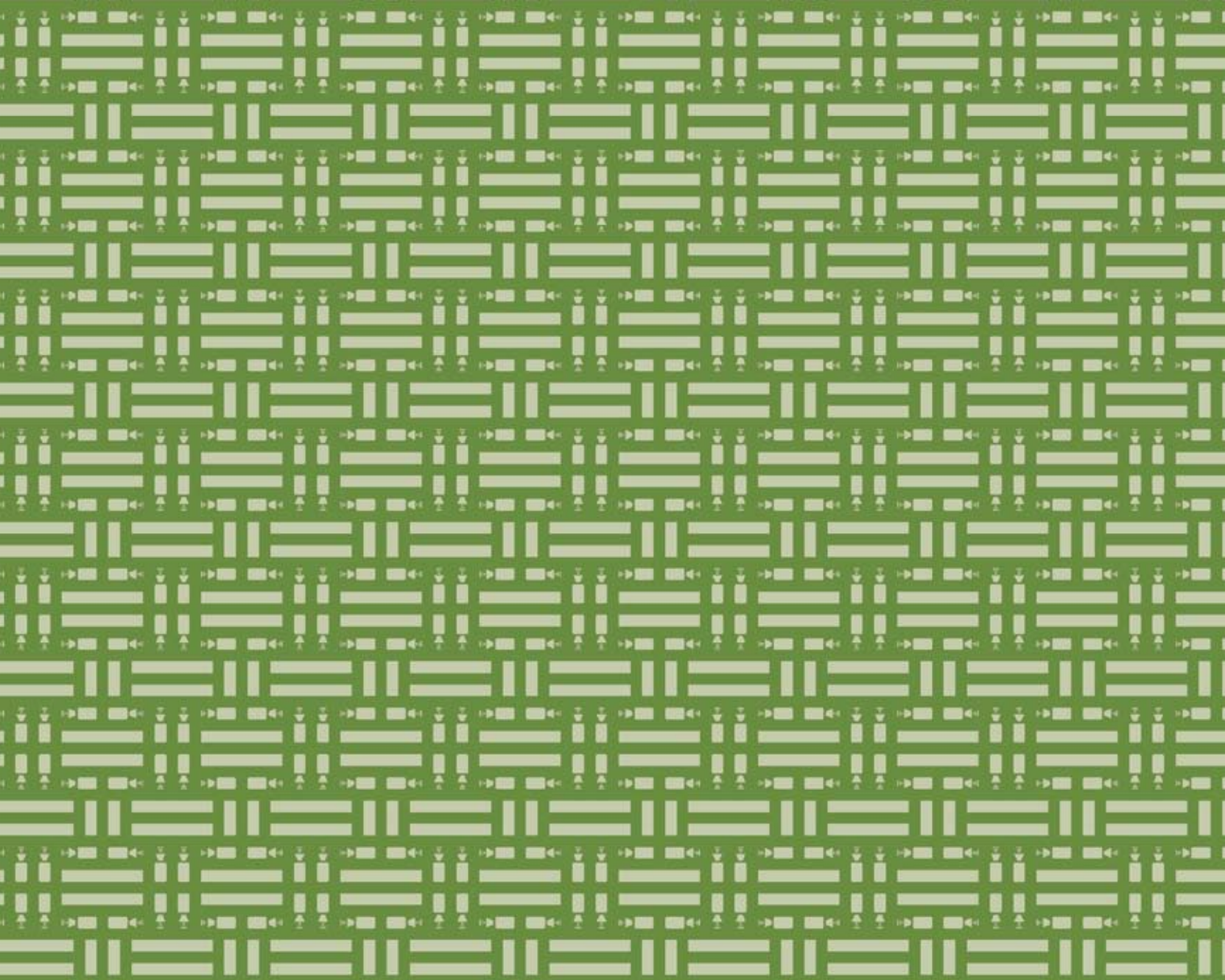
Maulana (Beoscope)
21 Januari 2009

Firdauz (KoPI)
30 Januari 2009

Rizky Lazuardi (Importal)
01 Februari 2009

Yoga Atmaja (Kawanusa)
14 February 2009

Aryo Danusiri + Ariani Djalal (Ragam)
22 Februari 2009 + 03 Maret 2009

Fendry Ponomban + Rahung Nasution
(JAVIN)
24 April 2009

Maruli Sihombing (UPC)
25 April 2009