UNDERSTANDING TED AS ALTERNATIVE MEDIA

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Tiivistelmä Referat – Abstract

This study aims to examine the political, economic, social and cultural characteristics of TED as alternative media. TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design) is a non-profit global conference media organizer that curates formatted brief speech called TED Talk and presents it in its offline conferences as well as publishes in online platform. TED has a global network that has spread rapidly through TEDx, a replication of TED-like conference by local communities worldwide. This social phenomenon makes TED as the contemporary illustration of the latest development of alternative media.

Earlier literature studies on alternative media from Atton (2002) and Downing et al. (2001) focus on alternative media's role as civil society that radically opposes the dominant power of the state, market and mainstream media. This civic role is important in providing alternative voices in democracy. Castells (2008) argues that the advancement of communication technology in globalization process has extended alternative media's civic engagement to global level and empowered the community to higher access and participation in alternative media. Bailey et al. (2008) surmise these developments into four approaches that see alternative media: first, in serving the community; second, as an alternative to mainstream media; third, as part of civil society; and fourth, as a rhizome-like hybrid media. This study utilizes these literature references along with the four frameworks above to present holistic view in understanding TED as alternative media.

By studying TED, I seek to expand these theoretical discussions by looking at how alternative media build sustainable civil society movement through dynamically incorporating dominant values in achieving its alternative media goals. This hybrid approach also affects alternative media's ways in serving the community,

promoting democracy and prompting social changes.

The methodology of this study is ethnography. Since TED has two social settings of offline conference and online media platform, the ethnographic approach of this study is conducted in both setting. I gathered field data through participation and observation on TEDx Jakarta event and interview with the founders as well as online observation on TED.com, TED Talk videos, TED's forums and third party documents on TED. I analyzed the data with the help of coding tools and discussed the findings within the framework of literature references.

The key findings of this study show that TED's political, economic, social and cultural characteristics are contingent, rhizome-like and transhegemonic. These characteristics project TED as alternative media that adopts dominant practices such as commercialism and controlled editorial system and maintaining elitism to reach paradoxically its civic goals of democratizing knowledge sharing and making social changes. TED also builds flexible partnership with the market and mainstream media and is not entirely counter-hegemonic. Although TED maintains a centralized authority in policy making, its relationship with its communities is based on rhizome-like network which strives towards semi-hierarchical access and participation, multiple replications by community and heterogeneity of its community across geographical and cultural borders. However this hybrid strategy of alternative media brings up threats of over-commercialization, elitism within the community, and ideological bias.

Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords

alternative media - civil society - community building – conferences - contingent identity – globalization – hybridism – participation in media - transhegemonic

Säilytyspaikka – Förvaringställe – Where deposited		
Muita tietoja – Övriga uppgifter – Additional information		

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I INTRODUCTION

TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design) is currently a social phenomenon within alternative media. It is a non-profit media organization that develops and curates global conferences, and represents an alternative to traditional channels for spreading ideas. TED gains popularity through TED talks, which is the core media product (called TED Talks) presented at its conferences. These talks are concise editorialized speeches by experts and inspiring speakers (who are known by the moniker TED Speakers). TED Speakers vary from world leaders, international dissidents, local heroes, and budding scientists; all of whom share diverse, groundbreaking, and empowering topics that raise cultural and social buzz, as well as intellectual enthusiasm.

Peter Aspden (2010, July 23) from the *Financial Times* titled his article on TED as "The Conference of Cool" to reflect the growing acceptance and prestige of TED as an alternative medium for people to connect, build networks, and spread ideas that can bring about positive changes to the world. Aspden interviewed TED's European director Bruno Giussani on this subject. According to Giussani, TED's success in becoming an alternative media platform is dependent on the failure of the mainstream media in promoting innovation and social change:

> They are less and less relevant in most of their daily coverage. The news cycle is dominated by bad news, cynicism and looking backward instead of forward. I am constantly amazed by how much space is taken by what has happened in the past. (Aspden, 2010, July 23)

Giussani's statement stems from TED's main mission to realize its famous maxim "ideas worth spreading" by disseminating innovative and alternative ideas. Traditionally, the alternative ideas conveyed in TED Talks were only enjoyed by the selected audience attending the TED conference. Later on, TED decided to launch the recorded TED Talks to the Internet so that wider audience could watch and spread these lectures for free. TED eventually decided to launch recordings of TED Talks on the Internet so that a wider audience could watch and spread these lectures for free. This move democratized access to the information in its knowledge product (TED Talks) to a

growing global community. TED did this by leveraging the network society and Internet technologies in a public space that Manuel Castells (2008) describes as, "the new global public sphere" (p. 90). Since then, videos of TED Talks have become viral with more than 500 million views ("Is TED Elitist?": "Talks", n.d.). Along with its other various humanitarian projects, TED aids its communities in replicating its production methods and culture, resulting in TEDx: a TED-like event that is independently organized by the public ("About TEDx", n.d). Its acclaimed achievements also highlight the endless polemic debate of whether TED, as an alternative media, is an objective and democratic platform without conflicts of interest. Posting these video lectures online and build a User-Generated Content (UGC) platform may have generate a democratic perception towards TED, but it is necessary to dissect critically the power struggle between TED and its community on the community's access and participation.

Criticism of TED being commercial or elitist, and its adherence to "a certain uniformity of view – broadly liberal and occasionally self-congratulatory" persistently rises (Aspden, 2010, July 23). Since the content becomes free and publicly accessible, TED monetizes its TED Conference by exploiting its social differentiation (if not discriminatory) appeal of valuable networking between affluent and influential people who are being tightly curated to the conference. Sarah Lacy (2010, February 9) argues that it segregates TED according to social and economic class as it constructs "hierarchy of parties…a clique within a clique" in its community. TED's main annual conference is still exclusive and serves as a medium for social distinctions of the elites rather than simply an intellectual forum for learning and sharing knowledge. Similar antagonistic remark came from the former speaker and famous philosopher, Nassim Taleb. Taleb (2010) accused TED as a "monstrosity that turns scientists and thinkers into low-level entertainers, like circus performers" (p.336).

In the interview with *The New York Times*, Malcolm Gladwell, a favorite TED speaker admitted, "Certainly more people have read that story as a result of my talk being online. If I can get people to read my stuff more, that's all a plus" (Tedeschi, 2007,

April 16). In other words, TED is unapologetically a lucrative media business. Aside from being an alternative communication and educational channel, TED is a marketplace for the "specially selected" TED speakers to promote their ideas to the world as well as for the audience to connect with the right people for business opportunities.

TED also profits from the global sponsorship enterprise on its website and from TED conferences (Tedeschi, 2007, April 16). Even though TED is a non-profit organization with a social mission for enhancing democracy without commercial purposes – TED's funding is heavily mixed with commercialism:

> TED has not only cracked the Internet's popularity code and established a preeminent status marker for the digital economy; it's also a money machine, aggressively introducing premium pricing ($125,000 for "patron" privileges), brand extensions (TEDGlobal, TEDActive), and other new sources of revenue (TEDLive, a conference webcast), while taking in an estimated minimum of $23 million per conference. (Wallace, 2012, February 26)

These critiques raise important questions on alternative media's civic roles, and how its existence cannot be separated from the political economy of the state and commercial market systems, as well as the social practices of difference and domination.

I seek to explore this phenomenon surrounding TED and identify TED's characteristics as alternative media in order to have deeper understanding of alternative media philosophies and practices. I surmise that a study on TED can make a crucial contribution to scholarship and activism addressing the latest development of contemporary alternative media in three ways. First, it provides understanding on how TED carries out its civic roles in serving community and democracy against its power play with the state, market, and mainstream media. The findings can be political reflections on whether the alternative media mediate the democratic gaps and empower the marginalized, underrepresented, and underprivileged groups in their power struggles

against hegemonic values.

Second, it examines how TED builds its sustainable, non-profit media organization using corporate-like management without compromising its social mission and alternative identity. The results on this subject could provide practical knowledge on the alternative media's operational and economic management.

Finally, it evaluates how TED's curatorship and rather centralized authority influence the democratization process of its media production, distribution and reception, as well as the level of access and participation enjoyed by its global network of communities. The outcome of this discussion can illustrate contemporary alternative media's power relationships with its communities, and the involvement of the community in defining alternative media's identity and works.

I developed these three ways of understanding TED as alternative media into the following research questions and sub-questions:

Research questions:

1. What are the political, economic, social, and cultural characteristics of TED as alternative media?

2. How do TED's characteristics and practices reflect the latest trends in alternative media?

Sub questions:

1. How does TED balance the power struggle between the state, market, and mainstream media in serving the community and sustaining its media organizations?

2. How does TED empower its global social network to access and participate, as well as facilitate communal identity building?

3. How does TED work as a civil society that is promoting social change?

4. What are the threats and challenges TED faces as alternative media?

The results of this study can provide positive supplements to scholarly research on alternative media by contributing new insight into alternative media phenomenon such as TED. It also provides a critical reflection for TED, its community and general public in understanding alternative media.

This study is comprised of five main chapters. The first chapter is the introduction of TED as alternative media and the implications it brings to alternative media development on which I base the research questions. In this chapter, I explain that the goal of this study is to explore TED's characteristics as alternative media which will provide analytical empirical picture of contemporary alternative media.

On the second chapter, I present the literature studies around alternative media to build a conceptual framework that supplies theoretical guidance, substance and foundation in interpreting the findings I have gathered from the field. I correlate different literature works about the development of alternative media from Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier (2008), Downing with Ford, Gil and Stein (2001) and Chris Atton (2002). Manuel Castells' (2008) works on global public sphere and network society complement this literature assemble by highlighting alternative media's role as global the civil society in network society. Bailey et al. (2008) also provides four frameworks I utilize to dissect TED as alternative media by looking at TED in serving the community, in opposing mainstream media, as part of civil society and the hybrid contexts.

In the third chapter, I explain the methodology of the study, how I collect and analyze data on TED. In the fourth chapter, I present the findings from the field and frame them

into four aspects of alternative media from Bailey et al. (2008) as well as highlight the challenges TED faces as alternative media. In the fifth chapter, I discuss these findings further under the conceptual framework. Then, I conclude the characteristics of TED and how these findings contribute to the trend of alternative media.

II CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This theoretical framework provides an important scientific basis that complements the data I gather to analyze TED's characteristics as alternative media. It also helps me to ascertain whether TED manages to fuel and materialize its plethora of democratic ideas into positive social changes, despite the criticisms of TED as being elitist, a promoter of hegemonic values, and of its amalgamation with the commercial market system. I start this discussion by presenting the transitions of alternative media's identity in Western media history, and contextualize alternative media in the contemporary media ecosystem. Then, I summarize it into literature tools that I use to dissect TED as an alternative media phenomenon.

In understanding alternative media, Bailey et al. (2008) claim that it is imperative to perceive media in its economic, political and cultural settings. It supplies, "theoretical and intellectual support for their identities and practices" (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 4). That is why they (2008, p.5) formulate multi-theoretical approach that sees alternative media through different political, economic, social and cultural perspectives.

I consider this multi-theoretical approach integral as a core conceptual framework in building a thick description analysis of TED's political, economic, social, and cultural characteristics. Not only does Bailey et al.'s approach provide a holistic and critical view on contemporary alternative media, but it is also rooted within the historical analysis of the latest developments in alternative media (especially from the Western history). Consequently, I include in the first subchapter the shifting definition of alternative media's characteristics over the years. This literature discussion is mainly referring to the works of prominent alternative media researchers such as Downing et al.

(2001) and Chris Atton (2002). Both studies examine how initially alternative media can be defined based on its radicalism or its opposition against the mainstream media and hegemonic power. But most importantly, they also introduce alternative media's shifting and fluid identity.

It is also imperative to see the changing identity of alternative media through its role as part of civil society, since providing an alternative platform for civic duties is a key justification for the existence of alternative media (Bailey et. al, 2008). I refer to Manuel Castells' work on the network society to shed light on how the civil society works in the contemporary, globalized environment. Castells emphasizes how the emerging network society and the Internet influence alternative media's potential to become a global civil society that advocates democracy, levels down the hierarchy of power, and empowers the audience. Barber's (1984) examination on democratic participatory models also supports Castells' view on how alternative media like TED can provide a representative platform to voice a global audience's aspirations and real participation in democracy. On the downside, Bailey et al (2008) warns of the danger of alternative media becoming another promoter of dominant discourses and cultures, which is reflected in social accusations over TED's plausible relation to elitism, commercialism and ideological bias.

As for the breakdown of this chapter, there are four intertwined subchapters. The first subchapter talks about the shifting conception of alternative media and highlights alternative media's contingent identity that inclines towards hybridism and a transhegemonic approach. The second subchapter explores how the network society and Internet can support alternative media to shape a global civil society that democratizes access and participation for the public. The third subchapter encapsulates the previous two subchapters into four approaches for understanding alternative media. The last subchapter provides a summary of the theoretical discussion.

2.1 Political, economic, social and cultural identity of alternative media

This subchapter discusses the various definitions of alternative media in relation to the hegemonic power of the state, the market, and the mainstream media. Part of the discussion discloses the definition of alternative media as the binary opposition towards mainstream media, and alternative media's radicalism. A second part focuses on the development of alternative media's transition towards hybridism.

2.1.1 The Contingent Identity of Alternative Media

Many scholars have attempted to define alternative media. Even though Chris Atton does not provide a comprehensive definition in his book, "Alternative Media" (2002, p.2) – I find his analytical view on the changes in alternative media compelling and of benefit to this study. Atton (2002) argues that the characteristics of alternative media have fluctuated over the year. He says that this inconsistency makes it challenging to define alternative media and causes "over-hasty categorization".

Atton (2002) proposes a resolution to the strict over-classification of alternative media by considering a loose opposition between alternative media and mainstream media. The British research group, Comedia, endorses this view. By positioning alternative media against mainstream media, Comedia (1984, p.95) characterizes alternative media as a non-established order, non-capitalist system, non-mainstream perspective, and simply a non-conventional way of doing something.

Bailey et al. also offer a general comparison of the mainstream media's and alternative media's characteristics rather than a black-and-white segregation, although they acknowledge this classification might change over time:

Mainstream media	Alternative media
large-scale and geared towards large, homogenous (segments of) audiences	small-scale and oriented towards specific communities, possibly disadvantaged groups, respecting their diversity
state-owned organizations or commercial companies	independent of state and market
vertically (or hierarchically) structured organizations staffed by professionals	horizontally (or non-hierarchically) structured, allowing for the facilitation of audience access and participation within the frame of democratization and multiplicity
carriers of dominant discourses and representations	carriers of non-dominant (possibly counter-hegemonic) discourses and representations, stressing the importance of self-representation

Table 1 Characteristics Comparison between Mainstream and Alternative Media.
(Bailey et al., 2008, p. 18)

Atton (2002) develops the picture of the oppositional and "alternative" nature of alternative media against mainstream media by adding the term "radical". It refers to the radical media conceptualization from Downing et al. (2001) and O'Sullivan, Dutton and Reyner (1994). O'Sullivan et al. (1994, p. 10) mention that that the main purpose of alternative media is to bring radical social change against established and institutionalized politics, and critically reevaluate the traditional values. O'Sullivan et al. (1994) also stress the radical content production, presentation and organizational

procedures of alternative media. This leads to the identification of two main traits of alternative media: as "a democratic/collective process of production" and as "a commitment on innovation or experimentation in form and/or content" (O'Sullivan et al., 1994, p. 205).

These traits of democratization and progressive thinking for change are evident in alternative media's function as a civil society. This sense of radicalism also entails alternative media's continuous attempt in pushing boundaries, experimenting, and challenging the status quo for democracy and social change. This is why Downing et al. (2001) propose the terminology radical alternative media. Downing considers this media radical since it is a collective movement attempting to build political consciousness (Downing et al., 2001).

Atton (2002, p. 22), however, criticizes the narrow context of radicalism that Downing uses for describing alternative media, because it is limited only to political media with the radical process of production, organization, and engagement. The term radical can easily confine the spectrums of alternative media into focusing on the social movement aspect of the political media domain, and fails to explain the growing terrain of diversified alternative media (Atton, 2002, pp. 20, 22).

Downing et al. (2001) agree and admit that their strict classification on alternative media as radical political media has loosened since the end of Cold War. They (2001) proclaim that both early "binarism" (between radical media with mainstream media in Western capitalist world) and "anti binarism" (positioning radical media beyond simple opposition between Western capitalist and Soviet model media) have lost their relevancy in explaining the potentials of democratization as well as radicalization of mass media. Atton (2002) revises the radical term into "the radicality of process over content" (p. 22). This revision demonstrates that alternative and radical media consisting of non-political content can also be radicalized through its media production process. It shows that alternative media organizations like TED can be considered

radical by looking at how they grow networks and spread ideas, even though the content is less politically provocative and radical.

In later development, Bailey et al. (2008, p. 20) criticize this oversimplification of alternative media as antagonist to the state, market and mainstream media. They (2008) argue that alternative media's identity is very contingent: "what is considered 'alternative' at a certain point in time could be defined as mainstream at another point in time" (p. 18).

For example, it can be problematic to see TED through the binary or antagonistic view as it becomes either a part of an alternative media movement against the mainstream, or as part of that mainstream. TED is not "small-scale and oriented towards specific communities", and it is difficult to set TED apart from the market. Nevertheless, it is also functions as a civil society organization with its own radicalism and alternative thinking. It is a global-scale non-profit enterprise that adopts mainstream media and market structure yet less rigid and aims for counter hegemonic purposes. Therefore, its contingency, flexibility and blurred position in the dichotomy bring forward the following discourse of alternative media as hybrid media.

2.1.2 Beyond the Binary Classification: Hybridism and Transhegemonic in Alternative Media

As previously mentioned, Chris Atton (2002, p. 6) suggests approaching alternative media as a process instead of applying rigid labels. Atton (2002) adds, "even within a single area of alternative media there is much heterogeneity (of styles, of contributions, of perspectives)" (p. 8). Atton (2002, p. 19) proceeds to acknowledge that the whole range of radical and alternative media – with their political acts or role instituting indirect changes – are a part of the opposition force against hegemony. Raymond Williams (as cited in Atton, 2002, p.19) further underlines that there is a distinction between the terms of "alternative" and "oppositional". Williams argues the alternative culture seeks to coexist with the existing hegemony while the oppositional tries to

replace it (as cited in Atton, 2002, p.19). Downing et al.'s (2001) radical alternative media of social movement falls into the latter category.

Altogether, adapting from previous rich theoretical conceptualizations from leading alternative media scholars such as Lewis (1993, p.12) and Downing et al. (2001); Bailey et al.'s latest work in 2008 so far becomes the most relevant and up to date reference, and provides complete, comprehensive and multidimensional definition of alternative media. Bailey et al. (2008) design this table below that theorizes traits of alternative media in more detailed fashion than the previous Table 1 of its comparison to mainstream media:

Domain	*Examples of the Domain*
Motive or purpose	Rejection of commercial motives
	Assertion of human, cultural, educational, ethnic ends
	Oppose the power structure and its behavior
	Building support, solidarity and networking
Sources of funding	Rejection of state or municipal grants
	Rejection of advertising revenue
Regulatory dispensation	Supervised by distinct institutions
	Independent/'free'
	Breaking somebody's rules, though rarely all of them in every respect
Organizational structure	Horizontal organization
	Allowing 'full' participation
	Democratization of communication
Criticizing professional practices	Encouraging voluntary engagement
	Access and participation for non-professionals
	Different criteria for news selection

Message content	Supplementing or contradicting dominant discourses or representations
	Expressing an alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities, and perspectives
Relationship with audience and/or consumers	Degree of user/consumer control
	Allowing the needs and goals to be articulated by the audience/consumers themselves
	Democratization of communication
Composition of the audience	Diversity and multiplicity
Range of diffusion	Local rather than regional or national

Table 2 Defining alternative media. (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 19)

The table above acts as a theoretical tool to classify TED's practices as alternative media. It categorizes and highlights important aspects distinguishing alternative media from other types of organizations by identifying its politics, media economy, organizational structure, audience control and representation, as well as its relationships with the state and the market. I found that examples from the domain of alternative media could be constraining but still useful, especially when I needed a rigid comparison with the mainstream media. I apply this classification as a starting point in describing TED's characteristics as alternative media, and debate that the findings might differ from the examples of the domains.

Accordingly, Bailey et al. (2008) also highlight the hybrid characteristic of alternative media, which make seeing alternative media more complex compared to the trait distinctions provided in the Table 2. Based on the framework of representations and alternative media's relations to Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony and ideological struggles, they come up with the concept of transhegemonic (Bailey et al, 2008). They (2008, pp. 16, 17) argue that language, discourse, and representation within history and culture construct reality and its meanings. This statement resonates with the main

purpose of alternative media: to represent and voice the values and ideologies "misrepresented" by the mainstream media (Bailey et al., 2008, pp. 16, 17). However alternative media do not necessarily provide counter-hegemonic representations because it is difficult for alternative media to operate outside the state and the market (Bailey et al., 2008, pp. 17, 28). Therefore, different types of transhegemonic relationships can be established (in many cases due to survivorship and sustainability issues) without degrading the potential of destabilizing the hegemonic values. They (2008, p. 29) assert that alternative media's transhegemonic strength of high degree of fluidity can challenge and change the rigid structure and power domination of the state, market and mainstream media.

2.2 Alternative Media as Global Civil Society

In this subchapter, I contextualize alternative media within the crucial components of democratic societies, specifically, the public sphere and civil society. It is important to understand these phenomena because the rapid progress of the network society and the Internet has led to the emergence of a global public sphere, thereby influencing alternative media's civil society role tremendously. In TED's case, they are crucial factors that enable it to reach a diverse and pluralistic audience, as well as empowering them with greater access and participation in the production, distribution, and consumption processes.

First, I will examine how the global public sphere takes shape. The public sphere is, as defined by Habermas (1996), "a network for communicating information and points of view" (p.360). In 2008, Manuel Castells elaborates on Habermas' public sphere as "…the space of communication of ideas and projects that emerge from society and are addressed to the decision makers in the institutions of society" (p. 78), which emphasizes the importance of the public sphere as the space where society can exercise power to provide balance against the state. Yet, this definition is insufficient to address the growing impact of globalization on the public sphere.

Castell (2008) defines the globalization as, "the process that constitutes a social system with the capacity to work as a unit on a planetary scale in a real or chosen time" (p.81). These capacities comprise of the "technological capacity", the "institutional capacity" and the "organizational capacity" (Castells, 2008, p. 81). Technological capacity refers to new information communication technologies (ICTs) that allow the world to connect globally (Castells, 2008, p. 81). The institutional capacity represents the trends of deregulations, liberalizations and privatizations by the nation-states (Castells, 2008, p.81). Lastly, the organizational capacity exhibits the optimization of networking as "the flexible, interactive borderless form of structurization of whatever activity in whatever domain" (Castells, 2008, p. 81). These capacities enable a revolutionary crossover from a territorialized public sphere to a public sphere centered in a media system. In the classical discourse, geographical borders and nation-state authorities confine the public sphere. In contemporary context, the advancement of ICTs has become one of the factors constructing the global/local media communication system, and Internet networks where the public sphere exists across borders (Castells, 2008, p.89). In other words, the network society organizes the new public sphere through diverse media networks such as the mass media, the Internet, and wireless communication networks (Lull, Cardoso, Chester, McChesney and Castells as cited in Castells, 2008, p.79).

Hence, Castells (2008) revises Habermas' traditional model of an "eighteenth-century bourgeois public sphere" by incorporating contextual, historical and technological aspects into a term called the "new global public sphere" (p.90). He (2008) explains that this new global public sphere is formed by a "multimodal communication space" (p. 90). This space enables society to, "harness the power of the world's public opinion through global participation on a global scale, by inducing a fruitful, synergistic connection between the government-based international institutions and the global civil society" (Castells, 2008, p.90).

Castells (2008) further describes global civil society as "the organized expression of the values and interests of society" (p.78). It structures and channels the articulated

views and debates of citizens over "diverse ideas and conflicting interests" and effectively compels the state to face its subjects in public sphere. Thus, Castells (2008, pp. 78, 79) reinforces the idea that the interaction of the state and the global civil society within the global public sphere shapes the "polity of society", in which the representation and decision-making process of a democratic society takes place.

It is also important to acknowledge that in this new global public sphere, the global network state still enforces the "defacto global governance" but without a centralized global government (Castells, 2008, p.89). Therefore, nation-states still have strong formal authority and power, but global civil society also develops the global network and resources (by using three capacities of globalization) that balance or contest hegemony in the new global public sphere. Globalization has expanded the arena of civil society and the public sphere from within nation borders to the global area, with this transition conducted around global communication networks (Castells, 2008, p. 78).

Moreover, Castells (2008) stresses the significance of ICT's role in providing the technological means for global civil society "to exist independently from political institutions and from the mass media" (p.87). Atton (2002) shares his optimism by pointing out that, "Internet technology has the capacity to erode the binarism of alternative and mainstream media and the polarities of the power and powerless, dominance and resistance" (p.6). Hackett and Carroll (2006) also believe that with Internet activism, alternative media can lead the way to an "alternative public sphere with powerful ability to mobilize resource and linking people cross borders" (pp. 45 – 47). But Carpentier (2011) dismisses this "techno-optimism" premise that progressive ICT solely empowers audience into, "presupposed interactive and even participatory nature" (p. 207). He (2011) argues not to leave behind the traditional media nor replace them completely with ICT, because this "Internet activism" is basically happening, "at the level of the intensification and massification of already existing participatory practices and models" (p. 207). Thus the synergy of traditional and new media

technologies is an important aspect in contemporary social activism of alternative media.

In overall, these propositions from scholars mutually depict that in a media-centric global public sphere, alternative media and global civil society collaborate (or infuse together) and prompt global expressions to fill the gap of global governance left by the nation states or the market. Castells further describes the four types of expressions the global civil society conducts through the media:

1. Local civil society actors defending local interests
2. The rise of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with a global or international frame of reference in their actions and goals
3. Social movements that aim to control the process of globalization for global justice
4. The movement of public opinion due to sporadic information and spontaneous mobilization through diversified autonomous networks of communication. (Castells, 2008, pp. 83 – 86)

I relate these arguments back to the subject of the shifting definition of alternative media within the context of globalization. I discover that alternative media have transcended a localized existence to being "translocal" and/or "glocal" media, based on the direction of the media. Glocalization emphasizes, "how global processes are influenced (and sometimes subverted) by local applications, interpretations and adaptations" (Bailey et al., 2008, p.161). Translocalization has effects similar to glocalization, but from a different point of departure: it maintains a local basis but transcends beyond its own initial locality (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 165). Both glocalization and translocalization help explain and emphasize the access and participation flow of the producers and audiences of alternative media.

These characteristics of the global public sphere (translocalization, glocalization and optimization of ICTs for media activism) provide a theoretical basis to redefine TED as

an alternative to mainstream media, a global civil society across state borders, and a competitive player in the market system. TED works in what Castell (2008) refers earlier as "global or international frame of reference in their actions and goals" and enables "local civil society actors defending local interests" (pp. 83-86). TED develops itself into a global civil society that can emulate these types of public articulations through redefined practice that Castells (2007) calls as "mass self-communication".

Compared to traditional mass communication, mass self-communication networks send messages in many-to-many way and receive messages in a multimodal form of communication that deviates from mass media, often avoids government control and crosses geographical borders (Castells, 2007). This practice is subject of comparison in data analysis chapter to TED's free online publication of its media content and its social media. I argue whether or not these features help society across borders to articulate their opinions in alternative channel.

2.3 Four Approaches to Alternative Media

The previous subchapters provide a preliminary background for dissecting Bailey et al.'s (2008) four theoretical approaches towards alternative media. Bailey et al. (2008) claim the complementary frameworks allow us to define different aspects of alternative media. This enables us to see a comprehensive picture of TED as alternative media activism, not only from a binary perspective of antagonism (alternative versus mainstream media) or a one-sided conversation on participation and community-based civil society, but also its complex relationship as 'transhegemonic media' with both state and market (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 5).

The figure below maps the general perspectives in understanding the four approaches. The first two approaches are media-centered and discuss alternative media activities from the perspective of the media producers in relation to the community and mainstream media. The latter two approaches come from a society-centered perspective that sees alternative media's potential for the betterment of society and democracy by

being part of a civil society, and balancing the power play against/with the hegemonic institutions. The first approach provides analysis from an essentialist perspective where the role of alternative media is in building its own communal identity, and providing access and participation in media productions to the community. The second approach takes a relationalist perspective and defines alternative media's identity in contrast with the mainstream media's. The third approach combines both perspectives and dissects alternative media's role as civil society through its media practices and socio-political goals. The final approach explains how alternative media develops into a rhizome-like hybrid media organization through its partnerships with hegemonic powers such as the state, market and mainstream media.

	Media-centered	Society-centered
Autonomous identity of community media (essentialist)	Approach I: Serving the community	Approach III: Part of civil society
Identity of community media in relation to other identities (relationalist)	Approach II: An alternative to mainstream	
		Approach IV: Rhizome

Table 3 Four approaches to alternative media (Bailey et al., 2008, p.7)

2.3.1 Approach One: Serving the community

Community and participation are two important aspects in describing alternative media roles in serving the community. Due to the emergence of the network society and globalization, it is necessary to refine these concepts from their traditional use in respect to geographic and cultural borders.

Redefining Community

In serving the community, alternative media deals with repositioning the community's rights and powers. It aims to facilitate access and participation for ordinary people to voice their aspirations and "for distributing their own ideologies and representations"

(Bailey et al., 2008, p.15). These strong aspects of community – its access and participation in the contemporary media landscape –necessitate the re-conceptualization of traditional definitions. Bailey et al. (2008, p.9) suggest redefining community by "supplementing the geographical with the non-geographical" and "supplementing the structural with the cultural", as well as introducing the concept of active and contingent identity construction by a community beyond space (online and offline communities). In the traditional sense, the structural factors defining community were geographic and ethnic ties, or more specifically, notions of collective identity and group relations (Liunissen as cited in Bailey et al., 2008, p.8). On the other hand, the non-geographic factors expanding community to virtual community are common interests and practices. The cultural factors also redefine community building as based upon collective interpretation, social constructions of meaning, and imagined community across the traditional borders.

Traditional:	Reconceptualization 1: Supplementing the geographical with the non-geographical	Reconceptualization 2: Supplementing the structural/material with the cultural
geography ethnicity	community of interest community of practice virtual or online community	interpretative community community of meaning imagined community

Table 4 Redefining community (Bailey et al., 2008, p.10)

The definition of virtual community from Castells lends rich insight to Bailey et al.'s reconceptualization of community:

A self-defined electronic network of interactive communication organized around a shared interest or purpose, although sometimes communication becomes the goal in itself. Such communities may be relatively formalized, as in the case of hosted conferences or bulletin board systems, or be spontaneously formed by social networks, which keep logging into the network to send and retrieve messages in

a chosen time pattern (either delayed or in real time). (Castells, 1996, p. 352)

I conclude that community is not only built offline within geographical borders, but also develops in online open and un-clustered virtual worlds. Community is also constantly redefining its identity and structure through cultural means such as traditions, common goals and interests, language and ideology.

Participation in and through the Media

Bailey et al. (2008, p.11) divide two types of community participation in respect to the media into "participation in the media" and "participation through the media". This division indicates the specific role and relationships between community and alternative media in social movements.

Participation in the media relates to non-professionals participating in the production of media output (content-related participation) and decision-making process (structural participation) and leads to active democratic civic attitudes and the strengthening of civic culture (Bailey et al., 2008, p.11). Participation through media, on the other hand, relates to "extensive participation in public debate and for self-representation in public spaces" (Bailey et al., 2008, p.11). It focuses more on media as a domain for hegemonic struggles, and as the facilitator of both conflict and consensus oriented models for citizens' "dialogue, debate, and deliberation" (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 11). In addition to this categorization, Michael Traber (1985) stresses the importance of audience participation as social change agents, "in which the individual is not reduced into an object (of the media or the political powers)" (p.3).

The purpose of participation, according to Bailey et al. (2008), is about, "the context of reduction in power imbalances, at both the broad social, political and economic levels" (p.13). This power struggle indicates the different degrees of influence community's have in determining media output, which Pateman (1970, p.71) describes as either

partial or full participation. According to Pateman (1970) partial participation happens when the involved parties influence each other in decision-making but a single party has the power and monopolizes the final decision. On the other hand, full participation occurs when the involved parties have equal power to decide (Pateman, 1970).

The table below summarizes the above arguments by classifying the level of access and participation of the community based on their ability to influence the media production and reception process:

Production	Reception
Access to the content-producing organization Ability to produce content and have it broadcast/published	*Access to the content considered relevant* Ability to receive and interpret content
Participation in the produced content Co-deciding on content	
Participation in the content-producing organization Co-deciding on policy	Evaluating the content

Table 5 Access and participation of the community in alternative media (Bailey et al., 2008, p.14)

Alternative media has potential as a platform for validating and strengthening the audience as a community by developing collective identity and relevant topics or activities (Bailey et al., 2008, p.31). Alternative media also opens "a channel of communication for misrepresented, stigmatized or repressed societal" (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 31). But Bailey et al. (2008) notably warn that alternative media can impede its

community service when it gets dependent on the community for survival, cannot develop two-way communication skills and interests with its community.

Carpentier (2011) also raises attention to the growing false assumption of full audience participation in media due to the rising assumptions that new media technologies democratizes audience's access and participation to media. He argues the advancement of digital culture help us to see, "the changes that characterize the present-day media configuration with its strong emphasis on informally organized audience activity (translated as participation in the production process, and not necessarily as participation with the organization and its decision-making routines or structure)" (p. 207). This statement crucially shows the progress in ICTs does not necessarily correlate with strong audience participation in media's decision-making and access to change media's power structure. This threat can also looms in alternative media practices.

2.3.2 Approach Two: An alternative to mainstream

The antagonistic approach in defining alternative media opposed to mainstream media takes its roots in the dialectic of dominant power and representation. The historical development of alternative media is also derived heavily on this division between alternative and mainstream media as mentioned earlier in the beginning of this chapter (Atton, 2002; Downing et al., 2001). Carpentier (2011) warns on the growing inclination in present media world to take for granted the dominant mainstream media structure in which, "media products are still produced by media corporations, which are old top-down systems based on capitalist logics and not always in favor of the maximalist approaches toward participation and democracy" (p. 207). Representation constructs reality and its meanings in alignment with the powerful dominant's interest. Alternative media is therefore a medium for subordinates to contest mainstream media's domination and its elitist interests by supplementing mainstream media at both the organizational level (more horizontal media structure) and the content level (ideologies and representations) (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 18). This approach aligns with Downing et al. (2001)'s description of alternative or radical media as "an alternative vision to

hegemonic policies, priorities and perspectives" (p.v).

Therefore, alternative media present a possibility of a 'third way' or alternative way of organizing media by having "more balanced and/or horizontal structures" and offering "counter-hegemonic representations and discourses that vary from those originating from mainstream media" (Bailey et al., 2008, p.31). Alternative media promote self-representation, plurality and diversity of societal voices as well as in the formats and genres of content (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 31). But alternative media also have to be aware on the threat of giving low priority or fairness to the marginalized as well as limited space to experiment (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 31).

2.3.3 Approach Three: Part of Civil Society

This approach highlights the relationship between alternative media as a civil society and its integration with the state and market through a "generalist model" and "minimalist model" (Bailey et al., 2008, p.21). The generalist model is based on a Hegelian concept that shows the market as part of civil society and the state as a guard for balancing the private and public spheres. Marxists see civil society more critically, as the sphere where domination is managed and structured (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 21). Meanwhile, a Neo-Gramcian perspective represents the minimalist model, and deems that civil society should be autonomous and independent from the state and market (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 21).
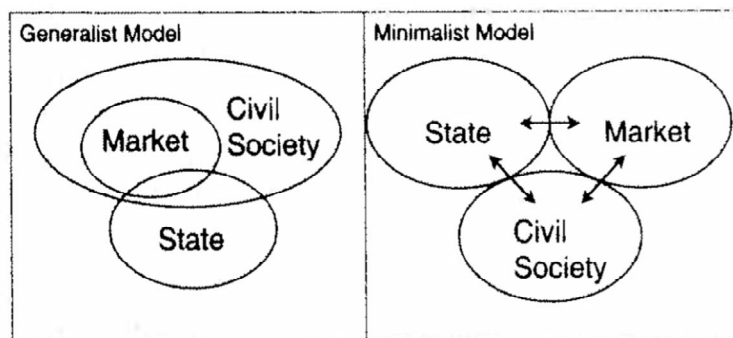

Figure 1 Generalist and minimalist models of civil society. (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 21)

From these two perspectives, alternative media can have different relationships with the state, the market, and the mainstream media. According to a minimalist model, such an amalgamation can compromise a civil society's objectivity and position as an alternative voice against the dominant state and market. Deeper insight into this concept is in the data analysis chapter addressing TED's commercial and non-commercial partnerships with the mainstream media and market.

By becoming part of civil society, Bailey et al. (2008, p. 24) emphasizes alternative media's competitive value in upholding democracy and "a complementary alternative to both public service and commercial media", especially in relation to empowering audience for participation. In general, alternative media inherit the importance of civil society for "enabling groups and individuals freely within the law to define and express their various social identities…and freedom of communication" (Keane, 1998, p. xviii). But Bailey et al. (2008, p.31) question the dependency of alternative media on the market for financial stability, as it makes it hard to reject advertising as prime source of funding. This issue can potentially compromise alternative media's interest with the market interests.

2.3.4 Approach Four: Rhizome

The term "rhizomatic" is coined by Bailey et al. (2008) to describe the contingence and mobile nature of alternative media. It is an analogical concept of the network of 'rhizome' derived from Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Bailey et al. explain the characteristic of rhizome as:

> A heterogeneous, non-hierarchical and ever-changing network…connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity, signifying rupture, cartography and decalcomania. The implication is that any point of a rhizome can be connected to any other point, but that the points are not necessarily connected, that in a rhizome there is no unity to serve as a pivot, that a rhizome might be ruptured, but will

regenerate, that is an adaptable map with multiple entryways. (Bailey et al.,
2008, p. 164)

Bailey et al. (2008, p. 27) further define the rhizomatic approach to alternative media on
three main aspects: "their role at the crossroads of civil society, their elusiveness, and
their interconnections and linkages with market and state". This approach highlights
alternative media's capability to play the role of civil society and at the same time
collaborate with state and market by assimilating them into the system without losing
their "rebellious" identity. Bailey et al. (2008) describe it as the "transhegemonic"
media: "These more complex and contingent positions bring them sometimes to
violently critique hegemony and in other cases to playfully use and abuse the dominant
order." (p. 27).
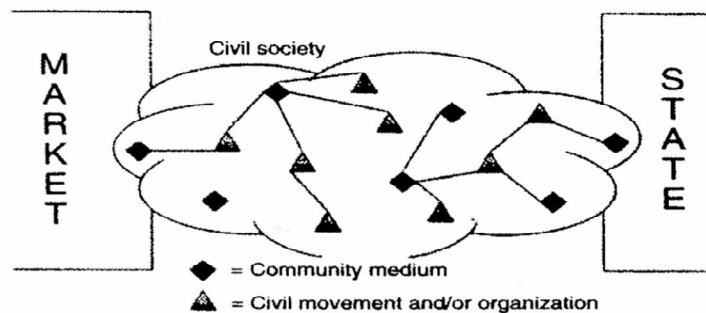
Figure 2 Civil society, state and market as rhizome. (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 28)

The above figure shows the transhegemonic relationship between alternative media as
civil society and the state/market from the perspective of the community's access and
participation in the system. Community members can access and participate in the
diverse community media and civil society organizations. They can also replicate and
build transhegemonic networks in the new public sphere with the mass-self
communication approach, and enjoy less hierarchical access to media production and
reception. The community media and civil society organization synergize with the

market and state in a transhegemonic interaction dynamic that allows them to coordinate and collaborate in a complex and contingent way.

Optimistically, Bailey et al. (2008) declare that its fluidity and contingency as well as elusiveness make alternative media, "hard to control and to encapsulate – guaranteeing their independence" (p.31) from the hegemonic power. They (2008) also claim that alternative media serve as, "the crossroads where people from different types of movements and struggles meet and collaborate" (p. 31). Its openness also strengthens democracy by connecting diverse civil societies, yet it can backfire since there is a possibility of "conflicting objectives with civic organization, threatening the medium's independence towards these organizations" (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 31).

This conceptual framework enables me to provide "a panoptic approach" to TED as part of an alternative media mosaic world, especially with its transhegemonic approach to its relationship with the state and market. It helps micro analyse the dichotomies of "alternative/mainstream" and trichotomies of "civil society/state/market" that structures the social, cultural and political fields (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 153). As Servaes and Carpentier points out (2005:10), alternative media have the image of civil society organizations and activism with the flexible identity to coexist in different systems. This fluidity of alternative media may blur the distinctions between the dichotomies of alternative/mainstream and trichotomies of civil society/media/state.

Some critiques emerge on how alternative media can collaborate with the dominant powers without maintaining the status quo or compromising its independence, democracy and social justice. Bailey et al. (2008, pp. 150-151) mention constrain of low level of representation due to the dominance of the Northern world representatives and knowledge experts as well as the commercial pressures or state and media controls. They propose two main strategies for alternative media to continue their role in these four approaches (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 155). The first strategy is to exploit the niche value alternative media have in positioning itself between the state and the market. This strategy applies well in the context of commercialism. It is in parallel with Christine

Harold's suggestion to work with, rather than oppose the logic of commercialism (2007). Harold (2007) argues alternative media collaboration with the market can provoke the commercial practices " by taking market values more seriously than many free marketers themselves"(p. xxxii). This means, alternative media have the potential to change the logic of commercialism. They design business model of cultural production that shifts from the dominant individual ownership and private control to collective ownership and social authorship (Toynbee, 2001). Such case can be seen in Creative Common project and open source movements whom TED is also following. The second strategy is to enlarge the rhizomatic network of alternative media. Both strategies are interconnected and focus heavily on the rhizomatic approach that enables alternative media to change the rigid structures of state, market and mainstream media.

III METHODOLOGY

I attempted to identify TED's political, economic, social, and cultural characteristics as alternative media by gathering well-rounded data from the field and texts, as well as analyze and interpret the findings with the help of the conceptual framework I built. Therefore, it is crucial to develop a methodology that provides the right tools to unearth and dissect the data while supporting me in building a clear yet multilayered picture of TED.

Based on that rationale, this qualitative research study takes a critical realism approach. This approach's main goal is to unearth the relationship between "social and cultural structures and everyday activity" (Deacon, 1999, p. 10). It also helps to "explain how they work in order to encourage informed action aimed at eradicating barriers to equity and justice" (Deacon, 1999, p. 10).

The chosen research methodology is ethnography. In general, ethnography, according to David Silverman (1993, p. 60) seeks to understand the organization of social action in a particular setting. This critical ethnographic strategy guided me to describe, as accurately as possible, the topic in context. It leads to data production with a thick description that can illustrate the comprehensive multidimensional narrative I want to bring forward about TED.

Due to TED's ecosystem as a media organization whose activities encompass offline as well as online events and conferences, I conducted the study in two fields, online and offline. In both fields, I gathered data as a member of the social setting or as a "participant-as-observer" (Bryman, 2008). However, it should be noted that online ethnography differs from the offline ethnography in terms of participating and/or doing observations as well as the settings.

Online ethnography on the TED.com and TEDx.com websites enabled me to collect and analyze data in an online environment, and "to look beyond amounts and distributions and to try to unearth the deeper reasons for behaviors or sentiment" (Skågeby, 2001). In

online settings, the data can be overwhelming and vast. Online data can also be beneficial as vast resources that I can retrieve anytime, anywhere, in any quantity, with traceable digital references or archives. Therefore, I defined closed parameters on what kind of data I should collect and analyze based on the research questions.

The offline ethnography (or what I refer to as traditional ethnography) also plays an important role in this study. Participation and observation were done in the traditional sense, and demanded my physical presence in a confined time and space. This approach was beneficial as I gathered data by attending a TEDx Jakarta live event and interviewing TEDx Jakarta founders. I produced field notes on the live event and interview transcripts. I argue this study would produce different results if I only reflected on the documentation of the live event without attending it personally, or if I had opted to do online interviews instead of physical ones. With this approach, I discovered how an offline social gathering like the TEDx event also influenced the way audiences accessed and participated in social activism and networking differently than in online settings. Thus, it is important to collect data in physical settings.

I took ethnographic actions such as offline interviews, offline participant observations, online observations, and the textual analysis of online content. Arnould and Wallendorf (as cited in Pettigrew, 2000) argue ethnography helps to explore "the symbolic meaning embedded in products". Ethnography was particularly useful in the case of TED Talks and the TEDx event, as it generated insights on the socio-political and cultural context of online media content and offline event related to TED, as well as the motives and representations of the data symbolized about TED's characteristics. It was also helpful in understanding the broader alternative to media production behavior.

3.1 Research Subjects

The research subjects in this study are TED and TEDx Jakarta because both social institutions represent the complexity of TED's characters, organizational management, and growing network of communities in global and local levels.

3.1.1 TED

TED stands for Technology, Entertainment, and Design. It is a global multimedia organization owned by the private, non-profit organization the Sapling foundation, and based in New York City in the United States. It mainly creates global lectures (called TED Talks) about ideas on technology, entertainment, design, and diverse fields of knowledge for positive social changes. TED.com broadcasts TED Talks as video streams on their website. TED has diversified its projects and subjects to various other media products related to its core offerings, the TED Conference and TED Talks. TED not only produces the TED Conference and curates TED Talks, but it also facilitates online forums, awards, and funding for the realization of ideas that matters, as well as offline activities to promote social changes and social activism. This study centers on TED's vast projects and features, especially the TED Talks.

3.1.2 TEDx Jakarta

To balance this seemingly one-sided top-to-bottom media activism, the study also examines the TEDx event, an event organized and produced independently by the local community inspired by TED.

TEDx Jakarta was established in 2007 by a small group of young, middle-class TED enthusiasts in Jakarta. It was the first community from Indonesia to license its TEDx event to TED, and has organized seven events in the past three years. TEDx Jakarta applies a standardized format similar to TED's, and incorporates the local socio-cultural context and community-based activities. TEDx Jakarta has also curated and produced its own TEDx Talks.

TEDx Jakarta was chosen from other TEDx communities because of its history of incorporating TED's participatory media activism in a localized grassroots and multicultural context. Another reason was the socio-cultural approximation between TEDx Jakarta and I. I was born and raised in Jakarta, Indonesia with a middle class

background. These social and cultural similarities enabled me to access the ethnographic environment and obtain insights that might be difficult in other places or TEDx communities.

3.2   Qualitative Data Collection

In entering the field for data collection, I referred to Skågeby's suggestions. Skågeby (2011) advises that the online ethnographer shall question herself and her subjects as to what is the social phenomenon, how to categorize it, and acknowledge that the researcher's experiences, preconceptions and values may influence the logical process of thinking.

I acknowledged that my educational background and preliminary literature studies on alternative media bring the possibility to influence the early conceptualization and frameworks on TED's political and cultural characteristics. Since this was unavoidable, I attempted to better utilize this background for the benefit of the research by giving context and a critical foundation to the collected data. I then expanded the data analysis beyond the previous theoretical framework, and conformed to the changes implemented in the field while I was collecting data.

This study is designed and categorized to be a qualitative study on media production as opposed to an audience study. The focus is on how TED, as an alternative media organization, curates, creates its product, and collaborates with the community to foster participatory media activism. It is oriented towards media studies on producers and the analysis of the content in media production.

Therefore, I established relationships with producers (and not the audience). I also conducted a textual analysis on TED's media content. Producers are people connected to TED or TEDx that help to produce TED Talks and organize TED or TEDx event. The media content consists of the lecturers in the form of TED Talks and other features in TED's online platform, such as blogs, social media and discussion forums.

Due to limited time and no access to TED Headquarter in New York, I had to define the relationship parameters, settings, and samples to the more restricted cultural area and socio-political community of TEDx Jakarta in Indonesia. The socio-cultural approximation of my Indonesian background also supported the ethnographic data collection in its natural context, and gave a localized perspective of media activism

I entered the study as a "participant-as-observer" by playing a role of an audience member in the TEDx Jakarta event in 2011, August 13. I established relationships with the founders and curators of TEDx Jakarta and gained access to interviews and TEDx Jakarta lecture archives (videos, photos and related documents) in 2011, August 16. Online observation on TED was conducted from early August 2011 to April 2012 for nine months. This long-term observation made it possible to develop a thick description on TED's activities and provide the latest factual insights on TED.

3.2.1 Offline Data Collection

I acted as a "participant-as-observer" by participating in the TEDx Jakarta event with the theme "Journey to Return" on 2011, August 13. This offline observation contributed tremendous value to the data collection. I gathered data on how the TEDx Talks, the speakers, and the audiences were curated, produced, and presented in a local, community-based event. The initial step of getting the access to the event was by applying online in TEDx Jakarta website. There was no offline application and the application process was only open for one day. This screening procedure combined with high enthusiasm from the public caused a large amount Internet traffic, and momentarily crashed the website. Without any special access, I had the chance to experience the competitive audience selection process. I was requested to fill in an electronic form about my background and write some motivational sentences about why I should be selected as an audience for TEDx Jakarta. I explained that I was writing a Master's thesis on TED as my reason for attending, and was accepted.

When I attended the event, I acted as an audience member and observed the setting, as well as the interactions between the audience and speakers. The networking was horizontal without any formal hierarchy of teacher to student, or top to bottom power distribution. The speakers were actually more eager to convince the audience about their ideas, and some demonstrated their works and causes. I spoke with the volunteers and audience members during the breaks to retrieve their feedback on the event. I did not cite their opinions as interview material, but rather for enriching my field notes and observation.

The challenge during the observation phase was the limited amount of time to interact. I observed and participated with the rest of the audience in a linear timeline according to the organizer's agenda. Unlike the online environment, time and space are restricted in an offline event.

A group interview was conducted with two founders of TEDx Jakarta, Arief Aziz and Kartika Anindya Putri on 16 August 2011 for two hours in a public place, in the company of my acquaintance. This acquaintance was my contact to the interviewees, but she did not involve herself or her opinions in the conversation. She was a good friend of the founders and a volunteer in TEDx Jakarta. She also declined to be in the interview, as she did not see herself as a fit for the representation of the group. Thus, the interview was done between, Aziz, Putri, and I in a conversational manner.

The group interview had a semi-structured design. It was an engaging formal interview with guides of listed questions and topics allowing the possibility to stray from the guide to find new perspectives and understandings on the topic (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). I chose this type of interview so that I could control the flow of the interview and sharpen the focus of conversations while allowing space for informal elaboration from interviewees to other areas that might provide untapped insights on the relevant topics. I also observed and started the interview informally to develop connections with the interviewees. The general topics and questions I addressed can be grouped into the following categories:

1. TEDx Jakarta history
2. Why choose the TED format to spread ideas? What are the benefits?
3. TEDx Jakarta mission
4. TEDx Jakarta curatorship process on the speakers, themes and audience
5. TEDx Jakarta partnerships with the state, market and mainstream media
6. TEDx Jakarta's relationship with TED
7. TEDx Jakarta's civil society role in promoting social change
8. TEDx Jakarta's future plans
9. Response on the criticism about possible elitism, commercialism and ideology bias in TED

Even though I was asking formal questions, the interview was casual. The downside was on several occasions the interviewees also asked for my perspective on the issues. I tried to be as impartial as I could be and refused to comment so that I did not influence their answers. However, the social and cultural approximation between the interviewees and I was leveraged to make them more open, and less cautious in sharing their thoughts. As we discussed their backgrounds, they also asked me to share my personal and academic history. We found that I had graduated from the same university, and was in the same debate club as the interviewees. This made the interviewees more relaxed in giving their views and more forthcoming with details, as they considered me as one of their own. Offline data collection primarily consists of interview transcripts and multimedia field notes report (screen shots, video footage, written notes) from my participation in and observation of the real-life interaction between the audience and TEDx speakers.

3.2.2 Online Data Collection

Online data collection was done through online observation and the textual analysis of content related to TED. By observing and analyzing online content about TED, I tried to reveal the "implicit practices, member hierarchies, relationship structures and tacit knowledge" (Skågeby, 2011) of TED. This approach was taken to understand the media

production process and TED's political and cultural characteristics in its development as alternative media.

The scope of online data collection covers the online content of TED and TEDx's main websites, as well as third party websites related to TED. I specifically checked these websites' features on TED such as articles, videos, blogs, social media, and online archives. I examined the online conversations and comments in TED's blogs, TED discussion forums and third party forums, as well as mainstream media opinions or articles on TED.

Due to widely diversified content, the selection of samples from TED Talk videos and community conversations was based on their relevance to answering the research questions and presenting TED's general practices. Each video or discussion carries diversified themes, yet adopts the similar standards of TED conventions. I used the search engine to find the samples related to topics I wanted to study, and I also surfed randomly through the Internet to find any inspiring samples. In observing the online conversations, I usually revisited them three times during the process of making this study to ensure the data was recent and that any change was acknowledged. Thus, I retrieved and utilized the latest updates, as well as using the latest reference and electronic link. I did not participate or state my opinion in any of these online conversations to avoid influencing the commentators' opinions. The results of these online observations come in form of field notes, online conversation transcripts, and online documents for textual analysis.

3.3   Qualitative Data Analysis

I started the data analysis by coding or indexing the qualitative data I had collected. Coding helped me to label, separate, compile, and organize data (Charmaz as cited in Bryman, 2008, p.542) into interrelated causal concepts and categories. Thus, I produced general concepts that I grouped and categorized below:

1. Online and offline access and participation
2. Audience reception
3. Media production
4. Curatorship and editorial process
5. Media vision and mission
6. Member hierarchies/ relationships structures/elitism
7. Mainstream media opinions
8. Hybrid
9. Political and cultural characteristics
10. Ideological bias
11. Hegemony Democracy
12. Civil society
13. Social change
14. Social network
15. Local values and resources
16. Local social activism
17. Global network
18. Serving the community
19. Ideas worth spreading
20. Alternative media
21. Non-profit
22. Sponsorships
23. Commercialism and commodification

As Bryman (2008, pp. 551-552) suggests, I created some general theoretical connections between the concepts and categories, as well as how they relate to the literature from the conceptual framework chapter. I tried to make sense out of the vast amount of data and random concepts by re-arranging them into new contexts. Henceforth, I produced the following qualitative data analysis framework based on Steve Borgatti's (n.d.) framework:

Element	Description
Phenomenon	TED's popularity and rapid growth as global alternative media
Causal Conditions	TED becomes global alternative media because its alternative way of spreading ideas through curated conference (TED Conference and TED Talk) is being replicated in local communities and online platform. This leads to promotion of democracy and social justice

	in access and participation of audience.
Context	The advancement of social media, ICT and globalization has the potential to be the alternative platform for democracy and civil society.
Intervening Conditions	The hegemonic powers such as government control, profit-driven market and hierarchy of access and participation within TED causes commercialism, elitism, ideological bias that intervene the democratization of TED and its main mission to spread diverse ideas for social change.
Action strategies	TED levels down the hierarchy of access and participation by including the audience in curatorship process and publishing TED Talks for free public use. TED supports TEDx, a TED-like event independently organized by local communities that would grow TED's global network as well in reaching more audience TED's partnerships with state, market and mainstream media should be done to sustain itself but should not compromise its integrity and interest as non-profit organization.
Consequence	TED's political, economic, social and cultural characteristics are hybrid, contingent and flexible towards hegemonic powers.

Table 6 Qualitative data analysis framework (Adapted from Steve Borgatti, n.d.)

Bryman (2008, p.552) emphasizes that coding is just part of the analysis. Further interpretation is required to explain the interconnections between codes and to justify the findings to the research questions and research literature. Thus, the qualitative data analysis framework derived from the coding or indexing above is a sufficient tool for navigating the data creating a connection map. However, deeper analysis and

interpretation can answer the research questions in a more comprehensive manner.

3.4   Validity and Reliability

This study was validated through a "triangulation of sources, methods and theories" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 9) and reference to other literatures and similar studies. Adding to this parameter, Jansen (2002, p. 259) proposes assessment towards the reliability of the findings "amount to knowledge which individuals and institutions are prepared to act on". In order to ensure the study findings are a reliable reference for actions in the future by the public, activists, or government officials – I validated and clarified the interaction between the sources, methods, and documents.

I assessed and conveyed critical reviews on this study by getting constructive feedback from my peers, academic supervisor, and from the interviewees. Most of the feedback concerned the writing and presentation of the study, and how the findings are valid and reliable. In response to their input, I conducted proof reading and regular consultations with my academic supervisors to improve the structure and deliverance. I validated the analysis and study results by building arguments supported by facts, previous literature references, and reliable sources. I also crosschecked the arguments and initial findings with my interviewees and peers in order to get holistic insights. I committed the data gathering and analysis according to the study methodology I chose. Thus, readers can trace this evidence and produce arguments based on the validated findings.

3.5   Ethical Considerations

I am responsible for maintaining an ethical conduct and ensuring that the participants in this study are well informed and understand the purpose of the study, and any risks it entails. Since the online material is very dynamic and easily reproduced, I conducted the data gathering only on reliable sites and provided the time of data retrieval, as well as the electronic links as references. Regarding citations, I only cited statements made in the public arena for public use. I also have permission to use the private conversations and statements from the interviewees for this study. I do not have any intention to

discriminate or pursue commercial interests with these citations. Consideration of the socio-political and cultural approximation between my personal background and the study subjects, TEDx Jakarta, was to avoid compromising my objectivity in gathering and analyzing data.

IV FINDINGS

In this chapter, I would like to divide the key findings of this study into four subchapters. The first subchapter examines TED's evolution as a hybrid alternative media by juxtaposing itself as a non-profit media organization that combines commercial and non-commercial business models. It also discusses TED's collaborative partnerships with the market and mainstream media used to sustain itself and reach its goals. I derived these findings mainly from Chris Anderson's TED Talk on revolutionizing TED into a non-profit organization, TED's mission statement, and TED's projects.

In the second subchapter, the discussion continues with how TED builds the collective identity of 'TEDsters' and motorizes the network flow between the global and local communities in spreading ideas, thereby prompting dialogue and making positive changes. The global and local networks are evolving into a symbiotic relationship. The rapid growth of local communities helps to sustain and redefine TED's collective identity by assimilating local values, interests, and cultures into its global community. Meanwhile, TED's globalized platform provides the locals with vast and diverse resources, amplifying their causes and participation in the global network. The interview with the founders of TEDx Jakarta and my participation in its community event helped me to analyze and articulate the findings.

The third subchapter focuses on TED's role, strengths, and shortcoming as a global civil society in its democratic practices and promotion of media activism. By developing itself as an interconnected knowledge-based open network, TED strives to provide a communication platform for the public (especially the marginalized, mis- and under-represented individuals and groups) to make their voices heard in the public sphere, and also to practice their civic duties in spreading and realizing innovative ideas. However, in examining TED's idiosyncratic curatorship and format of disseminating ideas, I found its semi-hierarchical power structure and economic interests contain risks for its political goals and the democratization of public's access and participation. I support these findings with data from the interview with TEDx Jakarta founders, TED's online

community archives, Melinda Gates's TEDxChange video stream, "Indonesia Teaches" social movement video stream, and the observations I made during the TEDx Jakarta event.

The last subchapter brings up the implications and critiques that arise from TED's conflicted interests and practices. There are threats of ideological bias, elitism, the potential development of a new hierarchical system of status and power, commercialism, and simply the growing saturation of ideas worth spreading into another rhetorical cacophony of the cultural hype surrounding idea conferences.

4.1 TED as Hybrid Alternative Media

The intent of this subchapter is to see how TED is an alternative to the mainstream media and ideologies. In this context, alternative infers being on the other side of the mainstream media in a binary or dichotomized relationship. I derived this position from the strict division between mainstream and alternative media (Bailey et al., 2008). At first, the alternative media concept I attempted to prove was that TED is a radical media organization that antagonizes and opposes the powerful structures of the mainstream media, the state, and the market. However, the findings in the field show a more complex story. I found the definition of alternative does not necessarily position the alternative media in a strict binary or antagonistic relationship against the mainstream media. Such alternative media traits are prominent in TED's non-profit goal to prompt social change by disseminating "ideas worth spreading". Unlike the rigid hierarchical structure of the mainstream media, TED is attempting to be more horizontal and give more access and participation to globalized communities, allowing them to set its agenda and present alternative views against the hegemonic perspectives. However, thicker description also shows that TED still applies the same practices as the mainstream media. It still maintains a unique semi-hierarchical structure in its idiosyncratic editorial process, embodied in the conference talk curators. The TED Headquarters' team still imposes final authority and control on using TED's brand or organizing projects under TED's format, through the review and release of license to conduct TEDx event, for example.

Furthermore, in order to survive in the capitalist economy, TED utilizes – aside from the Sapling Foundation's financial support – the commercial benefits of advertisements and sponsorships, thereby making profits by using TED global conferences as a source of funding. TED also collaborates with the mainstream media, the state, and the market as partners in reaching its non-profit goals. Thus, TED is a contemporary hybrid form of alternative media that blurs the distinction between itself and mainstream power structures.

In the following discussion, I elaborate on TED's alternative media characteristics by looking at its relationship with the dominant powers of the state, the market, and the mainstream media in three sub-discussions. First, I examine TED's decision to become a non-profit media organization while it paradoxically adopts a corporate-like business management strategy from the mainstream media. The second sub-discussion illustrates some case studies in which TED develops constructive partnerships with the mainstream media and the market, at both global and local levels. Third, it explores how TED's projects provide alternative media channels and content that differs from the mainstream media in its spread of ideas.

4.1.1 Non-Profit Driven Business of Ideas Worth Spreading

When TED was established in 1984, it was designed to be an exclusive and prestigious commercial global conference where leading executives, celebrities, and innovators in the areas of technology, entertainment and design could meet ("About TED", n.d.). They gathered and built networks by sharing TED's "ideas worth spreading" theme. Its trademark medium of dissemination is the "TED Talk", a lecture lasting 18 minutes or less focused on innovation from the brightest sources (often working within a clearly defined niche) – thereby building its prestige for networking and community development in the industries ("About TED: History", n.d.). One of many landmarks of history made through TED Conferences is the first demonstration of the then revolutionary Apple Macintosh computer (Heffernan, 2009, January 23).

The historical turn in 2001 revolutionized TED from being a pure commercial conference organizer to a non-profit media organization. The management of TED was transferred to the digital media entrepreneur and ex-journalist Chris Anderson. He became the main curator and chief of TED, working under his non-profit foundation, the Sapling Foundation. This crucial change to TED emphasizes several of alternative media's political and cultural characteristics. In his TED Talk addressing TED's transition to a non-profit organization, Chris Anderson describes TED's revised purposes: to be a non-profit organization, to be an open and sharing culture of ideas and education for anybody in any field, and to be uninhibited from its initial technology, entertainment, and design boundaries.

> So, I gave myself the job title of TED Custodian for a reason, and I will promise you right here and now that the core values that make TED special are not going to be interfered with. Truth, curiosity, diversity, no selling, no corporate bullshit, no bandwagoning, no platforms. Just the pursuit of interest, wherever it lies, across all the disciplines that are represented here. That's not going to be changed at all... Already, just in the last few days, we've had so many people talking about stuff that they care about, that they're passionate about, that can make a difference in the world, and the idea of getting this group of people together -- some of the causes that we believe in, the money that this conference can raise and the ideas -- I really believe that that combination will, over time, make a difference. (Chris Anderson, 2008, January)

This statement (or promise) defines what TED has become under Anderson's management. He sticks to the core humanistic and democratic values of TED, such as maintaining the pursuit of truth and all types of knowledge, the celebration of diverse perspectives, and being objective and neutral to any political or economic interest. Yet, in democratizing access to education and knowledge management, he also made a bold strategy decision: he combined the idyllic vision of a non-profit movement with a practical commercial approach.

Two strategic decisions Anderson made show how this business model works. First, he monetizes TED Global Conferences with its exclusive networks of affluence, influential people, sponsorships from big corporations, and funding from his Sapling Foundation. He uses these to finance TED's expansion to other humanitarian projects, and the development of TED's global network. TED's mission as an open culture of ideas does not necessarily mean that it rejects the established closed culture of mainstream corporations or the media. Instead, similar to an open market system, it embraces the best of advertisers and mainstream media that want to collaborate with TED and adhere to TED's values.

Currently the sponsorships – which range out beyond the industries of technology, entertainment and design – synergize their advertorial videos and campaigns with TED's format and vast content. Many of the corporations are Global Fortune 500 companies, including Coca Cola, IT Leaders, IBM, Intel, and even the fashion mogul Gucci ("Our Partners", n.d.). Various individual members, whose advice and influence TED solicits, are commissioned as the TED Brain Trust, which consists of influential leaders and game changers from wide spectrum of industries. Members include philanthropist Bill Gates, Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, Creativity Expert Sir Ken Robinson, and the chancellor of Kabul University Ashraf Gani ("TED Brain Trust", n.d.). These strong household names also help TED brand itself as a non-profit media and conference organization, and helps attract people to pay large sums of money to attend its global conferences, and be inside its exclusive network (Wallace, 2012, February 26).

Yet TED's ambitious commitment of "no selling, no corporate bullshit, no bandwagoning, no platforms" (Anderson, 2008, January) have been contested by its critics. They perceive TED's projects as another sell out to the cause of capitalism (Wallace, 2012, February 26; Jurgenson, 2012, February 15). Philosopher and blogger Mike Bulajewsky's jab at TED summarizes the critical view of TED's hypocrisy, "TED's 'revolutionary ideas' mask capitalism-as-usual, giving it a narrative of progress & change" (2012, February 15). Further discussion on this subject will be provided in the section on the challenges TED is facing.

Anderson levels down the hierarchy of access to share ideas. Concerns that once limited TED's content to the physical attendees of TED Conferences, including geographic, social, and economic factors, have been transcended by making TED talks available online, thereby helping to realize TED's potential as an open culture that is accessible to localized communities (such as TEDx) all over the globe. By March 2012, more than 1100 TED Talk videos are available to be shared and discussed all over the world, and in many languages ("Talks", n.d.). In its mission statement, the Sapling Foundation mentions that it distributes funds through TED Prizes that are worth an annual $100,000 to realize individual's social project ("Who Owns TED", n.d.). Meanwhile, TEDx has gone viral in the local communities that adopt TED's conference format and provide localized content and speakers. These communities are in more than 120 countries across the north and southern spheres ("TEDxTalks", n.d.). In anticipating this public accountability inquiry, TED describes its use of profits: "They are recycled to advance the mission of 'ideas worth spreading.'" ("Is TED Elitist?", n.d.).

These are the key sustainability issues in TED's hybrid business model. In many cases, other alternative media struggle, financially and politically, in supporting their alternative and non-commercial causes due to their rigid political affiliation and reliance on funding from fund rising or non-profit foundations (and subsequent dismal collaborations with the market) (Bailey et al., 2008). Thus, these boundaries limit their growth and mobility as networks, and are obstacles for alternative media in achieving their goals. By re-branding non-commercial and creating a more open culture of sharing ideas on top of already strong marketing and the established cultural image of TED as an elitist global conference, Anderson has built a sustainable political economy polity of alternative media in contemporary global capitalism.

4.1.2 Partnership with the Power Structures: the Market and Mainstream Media

TED establishes itself as a hybrid alternative media that combines commercial and non-commercial approaches in financing its non-profit goals, democratizing access and participation. In relation to power structures, TED playfully opposes and embraces the political economy of elites in achieving its goals, and supports itself as an organization.

TED is not a radical alternative media that strongly opposes or rejects relations with the powerful elites (albeit Anderson's above statement insinuated TED's radicalism against the capitalistic profit driven system). In the Sapling Foundation's mission statement, it believes in the three factors that, "...can amplify the power of ideas: mass media, technology and market forces" ("Who Owns TED", n.d.). By linking the three powers together in collaborative works under its banner, TED concocts its value as alternative media together with other types of mass media by utilizing growing technologies and financial support from the market to advance its non-profit causes. It becomes a practical alternative media that favours the mutual benefits and constructive partnerships forged with the market and mainstream media, unlike for example, the extreme anarchist underground movement of the zine culture. (Downing et al., 2001).

This practicality is clear in three current examples. The first is how TED collaborates with online mainstream media (such as *Huffington Post)* in popularizing its content and making it more accessible. The second is how the newspaper the *Jakarta Globe* supports TEDx's sponsorship and marketing, and how this localizes TED's approach towards the media and the market. The third is TED's relationship with its sponsors, their advertisers' synergized marketing campaigns, content with TED's messages, and TED's Ads Worth Spreading Award, which rewards creative advertisements in line with TED's spirit of spreading great ideas.

Partnership with Online Mainstream Media Huffington Post

As a previous TED speaker from 2010, the Huffington *Post*'s president Arianna Huffington is already a popular face in TED. On the TED's Speakers profile page, she is described as a journalist and the founder of the powerful media institution: "In May 2005, she launched The *Huffington Post*, a news and blog site that has quickly become one of the most widely-read, linked to, and frequently cited media brands on the Internet" ("Speakers", n.d.). Once criticized as amateurish blogging communities and populist news content aggregators, the *Huffington Post* has risen to lead online mainstream media publications (especially since being acquired and supported by

internet giant AOL) in a head to head confrontation with big traditional press like New York Times (Cashmore, 2011, February 10).

Seeing the Huffington *Post*'s strengths and past its shortcomings, TED saw a beneficial communication platform to spread and amplify TED Talks and ideas to a wider audience. Thus, Arianna Huffington further worked with Chris Anderson to curate, promote and release the best TED Talks of 2011 in a specialized *Huffington Post* online page called: "The Best of TED 2011: A Countdown of 18 Ground Breaking Ideas to Reshape The World in 2012" (Anderson and Huffington, 2011, December 1). Although they did not disclose how they curated the best talks, they highlighted the new, powerful way of changing the world through TED Talks for the audience:

> Two of these talks have never been posted before -- and will be unveiled simultaneously on TED.com and here on HuffPost. The others were introduced on TED.com within the past 12 months. And from there, they've made waves. They've gotten inside people's heads, provoking excitement, controversy, inspiration, and conversation -- a conversation that we hope will take unexpected twists and turns with the new blog posts and comments from the HuffPost community.

> When you follow the news, it's easy to get depressed about the state of the world. These talks offer a fantastic antidote. By pulling the camera back from immediate events to explore the ideas and trends underlying them, a whole new picture opens up. And, for the most part, it's hopeful: astonishing inventions, fresh approaches to old problems, new ways to teach and learn. Human ingenuity is changing the world in ways that will have far more long-term impact than our gridlocked, posturing politicians. (Anderson and Huffington, 1 December 2011)

Their statement shows that partnering between media helps them to reach a bigger audience, thereby making impacts permissible and constructive in this globalized and interconnected world. They value this partnership just as much as the novelty of

spreading ideas through the TED Talk format, and provide a "fantastic antidote" to the repetitive, dismal news reporting by old-fashioned traditional media practices. Each of the highlighted TED Talks have been seen by more than one million viewers (on average) and have been commented on by thousands on the *Huffington Post* site alone ("Best of TED 2011", n.d.). This fact presents TED's strategy to exploit any available communication channel in creating and distributing awareness of its projects, conversations, social actions, and in the end, concrete changes.

TED exercises an approach similar to social media and content sharing websites like YouTube. TED and TEDx have published most of the TED Talk videos and their other activities on YouTube for free, thereby gaining a bigger audience, facilitating access, and spreading their ideas ("TEDTalks", n.d.). Arief Aziz, TEDx Jakarta founder confides (2011, September 20) that "I subscribe to the YouTube channel because in Indonesia, the connection for YouTube is better than from TED.com". TED also approaches traditional media, such as television stations, to freely broadcast TEDTalks under its TED Open TV project: "TED Open TV Project allows broadcasters worldwide to air TED Talks for free, provided they follow basic guidelines (no editing, interrupting or showing commercials during the talks)" ("TEDTalks on TV", n.d.)

The sponsors respond to these partnerships with great enthusiasm, as they see TED's audience as a highly influential and powerful market for them to tap. Steve Petranek, Editor in Chief for Discover Magazine, eloquently emphasizes this: "Discover sponsors TED because we cannot imagine a more influential and powerful audience reading the magazine. There may only be a thousand of them at TED at any one time, but their ability to change the world is incalculable." ("What Sponsors Say", n.d.).

Partnership in Local Practice

Mimicking TED's global practices, TEDx Jakarta also collaborated with the leading local English newspaper the *Jakarta Globe* in promoting its upcoming 2011 TEDx event. The newspaper not only published a special excerpt of TEDx Jakarta's profile in its Sunday edition, but it also released extensive interviews with TEDx speakers and

gave away copies for free at the event I attended. The partnership continued at the last TEDx Jakarta event called "Deceptive Truths" in 2012. This passage from the *Jakarta Globe* illustrates their promotion of TEDx: "TEDxJakarta is a community of Jakarta's free thinkers and innovators, inviting everyone from all walks of life to experience the TED phenomenon…this year's theme discusses "Deceptive Truths," revealing the hidden truth of everyday issues that society is unaware of" (Hapsoro, 2012, 28 March). In my interview with Aziz, he mentioned the newspaper's enthusiasm in working with TEDx Jakarta:

> We had media partnership with *Jakarta Globe*. They were really excited…they realized how important and big is TEDx Jakarta. The executive proposed us for a weekly column on TEDx Jakarta, but I don't know about that. I don't think we can provide that content weekly…I just rejected the agreement with *Jakarta Globe* for one-year partnership because we don't have legal entity. Because we're just voluntary-driven so it's very unpredictable. We don't know if we make another event because no one controls. The incentives are very intangible. We don't have KPIs. (Aziz, personal communication, 2011, 16 August)

He was being cautious and declined more permanent and deep ties with the newspaper, such as offering a weekly column about TEDx Jakarta. He attributes this caution to the fact that TEDx was contingent upon a community and exists without any legal entity other than a license for organizing the TEDx event from TED. Therefore, TEDx Jakarta's decision(s) in partnering with the media or any commercial corporation is still rather limited, and subject to TED's approval.

TED is very strict and provides procedures on its website regarding the utilization of its brand, organizing TED-like events, rules on sponsorships, and even things like conducting PR, media dictation, and writing a press release. At TED and TEDx events, TED does not allow editorial control or any stage presence of the sponsors, ensuring that speakers on stage are chosen strictly by their merits ("All Rules", n.d.). It also prohibits the press from taking media content other than what's produced and released by the appointed in-house media producer ("All Rules", n.d.). These rigid policies and

the top to bottom review authority of the TED Headquarters team reveal TED's attempt to maintain its professional praxis and brand integrity against any possible compromise by their powerful partners' political or economic interests.

Partnership with the Sponsors and Ads Worth Spreading

TED has been seeking funding through its partnership programs with a very direct and practical approach, one that is similar to a commercial media organization looking for advertisement revenues ("TED Partnerships", n.d.). It even creates options for the sponsors to fund big attractive socially responsible ideas, ranging from simply launching a big idea to growing a brand image to concrete exercises such as sponsoring TED Talks, engaging in TED community projects, or even applying to TED for sponsor's internal communication ("TED Partnerships", n.d.). The result is the seamless cooperation between TED's social messages and the sponsor's branding and product placements. Under its "Start a Project" sponsorship banner, TED exclaims, "Use TED and the TED Community as a laboratory for growing a new project or direction, quickly moving thought into action." ("Start a Project", n.d.). It specifies three benefits for sponsors supporting TED's projects: "Amplify, Engage and Activate". Considering Blackberry's relationship with TED as a case study provides a clear illustration on how TED sells itself to the commercial market to obtain funding for its non-profit activities. TED amplified Blackberry's brand to its audience, and then activated a communication hub project at TED conferences where Blackberry, "showcased its tech leadership work and stewardship in the social networking space" ("Partner Case Study: Blackberry", n.d.). Blackberry ads also ran as "post-roll along side a rotation of TEDTalks". In the "Engage" phase, Blackberry had an opportunity to connect with influential "thought-leaders at the conference". TED also promotes its use of Blackberry's technology in TEDStudio and with content creation at the conference ("Partner Case Study: Blackberry", n.d.). The wordings in its copy are unabashedly in sync with a commercial business proposal trying to lure sponsors for mutual beneficial business relationships. It once again shows TED's playful and business-smart strategy to integrate commercial means for non-commercial gains, an association that most alternative media (like IMC) would rather avoid.

TED's tolerance level toward converging with the hegemonic system, whilst still holding to its alternative and non-commercial views, can be seen in its campaign to change the system by being within it. It invented the TED "Ads Worth Spreading" motto, which resonates with its mission of ideas worth spreading. "The dream behind this initiative is to find companies that want to communicate ideas with their consumers in the same way that TED wants to communicate with its audience." ("Ads Worth Spreading", n.d.). TED expects this initiative to prompt and leverage the standards of the commercial and non-commercial advertisement world ("Ads Worth Spreading",n.d.). Every year, it curates international advertisements that inspire and send positive messages to the world into 10 TED "Ads Worth Spreading" (Carpenter, 2012, February 28). As they describe in their official site, this initiative is to "recognize and reward innovation, ingenuity and intelligence in advertising -- the ads that people want to see, and share with their friends" (TED.com, 2012).

These ads are mostly commercial with positive message to make a better sustainable world, and come from innovative global companies like L'Oreal, Microsoft, Prudential, and even mainstream media organizations like Canal +. In its 2012 selection, only one advertisement is a PSA.

The introduction of one of the Ads Worth Spreading 2012 exemplifies the hybrid approach that TED applies towards the market. It publishes commercial, advertorial content as part of its justification for TED's curatorship and recognition of innovative advertisement:

> In 2012, L'Oréal Paris chose Aimee Mullins as their spokesperson -- an athlete, model, actor and an activist for women and the next generation of prosthetics. In this intimate talk created especially for Ads Worth Spreading, Amy explains why the brand's iconic tagline, 'Because you're worth it,' has always held great meaning for her. ("Ads Worth Spreading: Aimee Mullins", n.d.)

Unlike alternative media such as Ad Busters' (who represent a radical movement to "topple the exsisting power structures and forge a major shifts" by criticizing commercial advertisements and culture ("About Ad Busters", n.d.), TED prefers to embrace and work together with its oppositions in order to change the status quo. As it states, "We are moving toward a future where advertisers and consumers are part of the same community, sharing ideas and engaging in a learning cycle, together." ("Ads Worth Spreading", n.d.).

Thus, collaboration projects like TED's media activism demonstrate a flexibility to see beyond the ideologies and the political-economic practices of the mainstream media and commercial institutions. Behind its distinctive rules, centralized authorization, and non-commercial mission, TED's strategy appears rather sensible and less radical in partnering with the hegemonic power structures to prompt social changes.

4.1.3 Alternative Means to Spread Ideas

In this sub-discussion on TED's position as alternative media (and its relationship with the dominant power of the market and mainstream media), I examine how TED's alternative core values and media content differ from the mainstream media.

On its website TED shares its and the Sapling Foundation's mission in becoming an open political and cultural platform for everybody to connect with, share free knowledge, and make changes across the borders of nations, ethnicities, beliefs, and social structures:

> The goal of the foundation is to foster the spread of great ideas. It aims to provide a platform for the world's smartest thinkers, greatest visionaries and most-inspiring teachers, so that millions of people can gain a better understanding of the biggest issues faced by the world, and a desire to help create a better future. Core to this goal is a belief that there is no greater force for changing the world than a powerful idea. ("Who Owns TED", n.d.)

Based on its mission statement, TED searches for alternative ideas that it considers worth disseminating. Through these ideas, TED tries to represent the underprivileged, the misrepresented, and the marginalized. From gender inequality, human rights violations, and social injustices to the open source and freedom of information movement and the latest technology in graphic design or the food industry; TED attempts to provide ideas relevant to everyone.

TED's goal is to be the biggest franchiser of ideas. At its next TED Global Conference in 2012, with the main theme of "Full Spectrum": "It aims to be more multimedia than ever" (Wallace, 2012, February 26) by supplying the widest spectrum of relevancy in terms of audience, speakers, and ideas. These three interchanging, vital components of TED are the main ingredients in keeping it competitive with other, similar media or conference organizations. It habitually lifts unsung local heroes such as previously unknown academics, social activists, or simple citizens to the international spotlight, and popularizes their agendas and causes to a global audience. It is crucial to keep in mind, however, that the market's interests and TED's own ideological bias polarizes these efforts to diversify the content, speakers, and audience. What TED considers diversity in quality turns out in many cases as plurality in quantity. The mushrooming numbers of TED Talks and audience views cannot provide an objective guarantee that all social groups' interests are represented at TED. The other issue is the potential for the popular TED's Speakers' activisms and social causes developing into simply another case of celebrity culture. Susan Cain (2012, April 27), a recent TED Speaker, remarks that TED Speakers have to refine their presentation and performance skills; similar to how a rock star works to get people's attention. She also admits that she is changing her style of presentation to reflect TED's speech style, and public speaking for TED and other media as way to promote her book (Cain, 2012, April 27). This phenomenon illustrates TED's potential to become a platform for self-promotion. I would explain further in the last subchapter about the threats and challenges of TED.

TED has generated versatile lines of projects from its core TED Conference. At its website, I have found significant changes in its project descriptions and updated project results over the past two years. They show the rapid growth of new projects and

associated partnerships undertaken by both TED and its globalized network of local communities. The content and goals of these projects are very diverse, yet they all contribute to building an interconnected knowledge network. These projects carry the DNA of TED's motto 'ideas worth spreading' and links to TED's means of spreading ideas through TED Talk. Below are some illustrations I made of TED's latest projects, and how they emulate alternative media's focus on human, cultural, and educational ends:

The springtime TED Conference is TED's original main project, and first introduced TED's **TED Talk** formula of creative presentation less than 18 minutes in length. Both the speakers and audience, as well as the content of the presentations, are curated by the TED team to present," breadth of content includes science, business, the arts and the global issues facing our world." ("About TED", n.d.). They are organized so that, "everyone shares the same experience. It shouldn't work, but it does. It works because all of knowledge is connected… where we see, to our astonishment, an intricately interconnected whole." ("About TED", n.d.). **TEDActive** is an extended version of this concept from the Long Beach TED Conference, and presented in a live simulcast. It is a good money churner as it taps the audience market that is not able to attend the TED Conference, yet wishes to enjoy the TED-like atmosphere and networking opportunities. In 2010, it was held in, "the swanky, mountain-framed and pool-dappled Riviera Resort in Palm Springs", where selected audiences that have $3750 (USD) could build networks and enjoy conversations in the four-day workshop ("About TED", n.d.).

TED further capitalizes and internationalizes the exclusive networking and knowledge-sharing practices between the influential attendees and speakers of the TED Conference by expanding the market outside the U.S. with **TEDGlobal,** thereby creating potent, segmented audiences in geographic areas such as India (with **TEDIndia**) and social sectors such as women (with **TEDWomen**). TEDGlobal has themes that are more international but maintains the full format of a TED Conference, and also adds TED University that allows attendees to share knowledge with each other. "TEDGlobal was held in Oxford, UK, in 2005, 2009 and 2010, and in Arusha, Tanzania, in 2007.

TEDGlobal is now held annually in Edinburgh, Scotland." ("About TED", n.d.). Additionally, smaller events such as, "**TED Salons**, evening-length events with speakers and performers, and **TED@** events, exploring a topic or location" ("About TED", n.d.) are conducted worldwide, so that more people in TED's community can brainstorm and interact offline face to face.

Despite these developments, the flagship conferences have been the subject of disputes and criticism over TED's elitism, its self-congratulatory rhetoric, and its commercialized confab against its intention for open culture and significant social changes (Jurgenson, 2012, February 15). Thus, TED attempts to bridge the social economy gap by optimizing the online platform of **TED.com** into a market place for everyone. Its online communities get access to TED's resources, including its massive collection of **TED Talks** videos, TED's social networks, and opportunities to participate in conversations ("About TED", n.d.). TED.com also helps TED in cultivating a collective identity with its members, and integrates its networks around the globe through its social media features such as **TED Community** and **TED Conversations.**

TED rewards its communities and members by giving an annual TED Prize of one hundred thousand dollars to an individual with "One Wish to Change the World" to realize high impact projects. Meanwhile, TED also recruits innovators and influential people from many disciplines to build rich member profiles: technology, entertainment, design, the sciences, the humanities, the arts, NGOs, business and more" to be part of **TED Fellows**, TEDGlobal Fellows, and TED Senior Fellows ("About TED", n.d.).

Another apparent movement towards reaching a wider audience is also present in TED's e-book publishing enterprise. TED's exclusive book club was introduced by Anderson (2008) in an early TED Talk. He advocated the use of additional curated books related to TED Conference topics and largely made by TED Speakers for the audience to read. TED now publishes **TED Books** online with a price of less than three dollars each. They cover global and daily issues with deeper insight, yet in less than twenty thousand words ("TED Books", n.d.).

TED also realizes there is a language barrier in its resources, as their mostly English content limits the audience's access. Therefore, **The TED Open Translation Project** has opened the gate for TED to reach a larger, non-English speaking public worldwide, as well as the hearing-impaired people and search engine (that can index the transcripts). TED launched the project with "300 translations, 40 languages and 200 volunteer translators; one year on, there are more than 21000 completed translations from our thousands-strong community" ("About TED", n.d.).

Nevertheless, TED's most significant effort to bring down the level of hierarchy and exclusivity at TED Conferences is **TEDx**. It is an independently organized "TED-like experience" event organized by local communities to address local concerns and interests. Even though TED has the final say in releasing the license to organize TEDx events, and retains control over the general format to ensure adherence to TED's standards, TEDx has become an extremely popular non-profit tool for communities to spread ideas and voice themselves. TEDx has diversified and catered the TED format for events suited to often marginalized or under-represented audiences, such as communities from the developing world, women, kids/youth, university and even communities within corporations or institutions ("About TEDx", n.d.). **TEDxChange** also benefits from the partnerships and sponsorships between TED and other powerful institution, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, by bringing together all TEDx organizers worldwide for "meaningful discussions" online, focusing on global health and development issues ("TEDxChange", n.d.).

In responding to critiques on its elitism, TED claims to produce projects whose power and ideas flow not only from the elites' or leaders' initiatives, but also from activists and common people from the bottom of social pyramids. Activist Suraj Sudhakar organized TEDxKibera in one of the largest slums in Africa. His work inspired TED in launching TED Activators, a program training activists in organizing TEDx events and developing TED Communities in the developing world and underprivileged communities, and even equipping them with TED-in-a-box start up toolkits ("TED Activators", n.d.).

Despite these efforts, TED still faces criticism. TED ventures to juggle its projects between supporting or augmenting current hegemonic views, as well as challenging them. This causes waves of harsh critiques from the public and accusations that TED maintains the status quo instead of radically transforming power structures. A social media theorist, Nathan Jurgenson (2012, February 15) perceives TED's diversity of representations especially on the marginalized groups (such as TED Women) as tokenism. This tokenism projects growing assumptions that TED caters all public's causes and interests and disguises its real purposes of exploiting and monetizing the marginalized groups. He (2012, February 15) also argues that TED's content is heavily editorialized based on its ideological bias and TED's curatorship omits more important but less marketable issues. This critique is in parallel with other critiques on the commercialization and elitism of TED Conference and network.

4.2 TED as Community

Another key finding in the study discusses how TED works in a global and local context. Insights about how TEDx Jakarta and TED's global networks connect through online platforms, how TED's collective identity is built, and how communities access and participate in TED are produced.

4.2.1 Building the Collective Communal Identity of an Open Interconnected Knowledge and Network

I used TEDx as a case study to present findings on how TED's collective identity as a global community is built. From my observations and participation in the TEDx Jakarta event, as well as in-depth interviews with its co-founders, I found that their collective identity as "TEDsters", (and the whole global community) is based on the idea that open, interconnected knowledge roots itself in TED's mission of "ideas worth spreading".

TED believes that all knowledge is connected and related by efforts to make better solutions to the world's problems ("About TED", n.d.). Arief Aziz and Kartika Anindya

Putri (personal communication, 2011, August 16), the two co-founders of TEDx Jakarta, shared this view. Aziz elaborated on this key to TED's success by explaining that what drew him to this alternative media was TED's global to local wisdom of crowd networking:

> So I saw something interesting in TED's philosophy about the interconnectedness of knowledge. All knowledge is connected with one another. And I think the connectors are within them. And I think that is what you get from TED. I think a lot of formats work. I can't say this is the best format. But I think it is all in the execution. How we prepare the speakers. It depends on how we create a place for people to mingle in the event. It depends on what videos we choose and how we design the flow, the quality of everybody in the event. And it works. (Aziz, personal communication, 2011, August 16).

The universal interconnectedness of inspiring ideas, and also reaching the right people from different backgrounds in a smaller local learning network, is what the TEDx Jakarta team aims for. Their communal texts emphasize this sentiment. Putri also pointed out how TED has inspired them about the importance of heterogeneity and growing their network:

> Historically, Chris Anderson acquires TED from its previous mission over money. The reason he acquires TED is that when he went to TED, he was amazed by the unbelievable network and dialogue occurring during the session breaks in the conference. Because you get to mingle with amazing people. (Putri, personal communication, 2011, August 16)

By sharing ideas through open interconnected knowledge forums, people holding diverse or even antagonistic social, cultural, political, and economical beliefs and backgrounds can connect with each other, utilize TED's platform, and crowdsource their resources. In its own words, it describes itself as a global community that is an open "clearing house" for ideas:

Today, TED is best thought of as a global community. It's a community welcoming people from every discipline and culture who seek a deeper understanding of the world. ("About TED", n.d.)

The open and interconnectedness between TED and its community members represents the contingency of alternative media and the two-way flow of communication and participation in building TED's identity. Globalization plays a major part in enabling this contingency and provides a flexible flow as TED expands its network and collective identity into global and local contexts. This subject will be discussed further in the following subchapter.

4.2.2 Globalizing and Localizing TED's community

The characteristic of contingency is apparent in TED's practical and flexible approach towards the hegemonic as well as alternative views, and in the power structures building its community. Looking at the TED community's demographics, they demonstrate a vast spectrum of people from various races, religions, and occupations. They encompass affluent and influential TED members like sponsors from commercial companies and executives to grass roots activists, students, housewives, and people looking for jobs or business ideas and networks ("TED Community", n.d.). TED finds that its transformation to a non-profit organization and shifting its focus to reach larger audiences from different social classes, economic situations, and political backgrounds highlights strategic ways to spread ideas more democratically and build more horizontal networks. Many communities that were previously detached and dispersed geographically can now integrate under TED's banner and social platform.

This identity formation in TED's community is an ongoing process of a fluid exchange of ideas and networking between TED's global network and the locals, and negotiated through the combination of online and offline access and participation. By blurring the distance or hierarchy between the media producers and users into *pro-users,* TED has built a symbiotic mutualism with its local members that help it redefine itself as a global community. TEDx enables two-way communication between the audience and TED as

alternative media producers by giving the public wider access and participation in TED's editorial, curatorial and event organizing.

This characteristic is evident in TED's evolution into a more global and more local network, and at the same time through its various localized impact projects such as TEDx. Through TEDx, TED has the opportunity to maximize the impact of its global media activism by replicating them to local levels, thereby reaching a larger audience. In other words, global values reach the locals. Meanwhile, TEDx provides a communication platform for under privileged and marginalized locals to amplify their local causes to TED's global networks. The local values help to redefine the global identity of TED. Thus, TED's brand, networks, and relationship with audiences all become stronger by incorporating local values and resources while giving the local communities a new channel to fight for their causes, as well as develop an identity integrated with TED's global social movement.

When I spoke with Aziz about this topic, he told me the story of how TEDx Jakarta began. As a frequent TED Talk audience member from Jakarta, Indonesia, he shared TED Talks videos and discussed them with his colleagues. He (personal communication, 2011, August 16) didn't realize at the time he would co-found TEDx Jakarta, developing a local community with a global impact. TED's branding helps TEDx Jakarta integrate into a wider global network outside their localized connections. Different communities now enable themselves to breach local, national, and cultural borders by relating their activities to TED and its global network. Moreover, in parallel with what Bailey et al. (2008) confirm as the role of alternative media, TED validates and encourages the community to discuss and take action on topics relevant to them.

TED also emancipates social groups from marginalization and repression by giving them connections and access to various communication channels and international exposure. The TED-in-a-box practical toolkit for communities with poorly developed infrastructure in underserved areas is an exemplary TED exercise to reach out grassroots communities ("TED Activators", n.d.). By fostering TEDx from

development to sponsorship, TED is trying to mediate the access and participation gap between communities to improve their local knowledge and networks.

TEDx Jakarta, along with other TEDx projects in Indonesia and around the world, partakes in a collective identity under TED; one they build using global connections with independently organized meetings, forums and workshops. At the same time, they are cultivating and exploiting TED's tools for networking and building social movements. Like many other TED activists, Aziz (personal communication, 2011, August 16) has self-financed himself to go to TED global conferences and TEDx meetings overseas, and mentored the growing local communities that are interested in applying TED's communication strategies. He has become an active producer as well as a user of TED, and participated directly and indirectly in reshaping and nurturing TED's identity as alternative media. Similarly, Putri explored how these societal groups supported each other's growth:

> Another thing since long time ago we would like to see is more TEDx events. Because we worry if there's a perspective that only TEDx Jakarta could exist and not other TEDx event is allowed to exist. We don't want it like that. TEDx Jakarta is just a licensing name. We can also make TEDx Binus, TEDx UI or like in Jakarta, TEDx Green, TEDx Kemang, TEDx Tangsel. So if there's people coming to TEDx Jakarta and gets inspired to make their own TEDx event, we will be more than happy to help out. (Putri, personal communication, 2011, August 16)

On the other hand, TED also plays a crucial role in maintaining their identity and practices. TED systematically instilled its standards on members by obligating them to attend TED Conferences for training and "cadres" building before granting them the license to organize bigger TEDx events or any TED initiatives ("About TEDx"; "TED Activators", n.d.).

According to my observations, each community such as TEDx Jakarta has a certain degree of freedom for creativity to accommodate their collective interests and localized

content. As they mimic TED's global network and idiosyncratic culture, these communities also reshape and redefine TED through localized individual and collective participation, access, and works. As mentioned earlier, this phenomenon presents the development of transglocal communities whose flow of information and power come not only from dominant global organizations such as TED, but also from the local communities on whom TED is dependant for defining its identity.

4.2.3 Hybrid access and participation in TED's community

In this subchapter, I explore the hybrid nature of access and participation caused by the power dynamic between TED and its communities. In this context, hybrid indicates the blurring distinction between alternative media and mainstream media with respect to providing access and allowing the participation of its communities. As discussed in the literature review, Bailey et al. (2008) consider that alternative media can liberate access and participation to civil society, and aid in community building that was once limited by the traditional closed power structures of the mainstream media. However, TED still holds legal approval over its community activities, even though its open online platform levels the hierarchy towards access and participation. Therefore, the hybrid model also refers to the integration of the community's online and offline activities within TED's semi horizontal power structure, where TED still has centralized editorial and managerial authority in the usage of its platform and branding.

With the help of the Internet and its robust online platform, TED seamlessly combines its offline communities with its virtual ones and eliminates traditional conceptualizations of community defined by geographical and ethnical factors. TED's global community is conceptualized as an imagined community of interconnected knowledge sharing and management with two-way mass-communication social networks. Its collective identity is contingent and interpretative while its medium is universal and the combination of many means of communication. This premise of the hybrid approach presents ways TED members develop and utilize TED's social media features such as TED Community and TED Blog, as well as organize TEDx events.

TED's Community online and Offline Participation

Through its social media feature called TED Community, members can become TEDx organizers, local activists, entrepreneurs, students, or simply curious individuals around the world registering with this global community. Joining gives them access to collaborate, debate, and deliberate about taking social action. The TED Community enables its members to build their profiles and social networks, making it into a large global directory of diverse talents, skills, interests, and resources that connect people for collaborations in business or social movements.

TED Community ("Members", n.d.) also demonstrates the online networking capability between TED members by providing this mash-up between Facebook and LinkedIn, where its online communities can interact and build social networks in TED's market place. The members can make their profile pages, update their CVs, and connect with other TED members. They can even acknowledge their achievements and "ranks" through the badge and credit system (which shows how active a member through his/her activities related to TED world of spreading ideas). Just like any other community, TED Community has its own economy of rewards and punishments. This economy has currency called TEDCred. Certain TEDCreds are granted to every member who has a badge corresponding to respective roles in the community (for example, TED organizer, translator, advisors). Through its online world, they can establish their identity, connect, recruit, and be recruited for realizing their causes and projects. It becomes TED's human resource database and knowledge management tool through the active participation of its members. Each time the members raise discussions or make comments, they voluntarily submit their knowledge and state of mind for the whole world to access.

Even though TED transparently states its authority to delete racy comments and reduce member's credits, (similar to its curatorship process), it does not explain how this editorial process works. Yet it gives certain space for people from opposite points of view to debate and criticize either the message or the way TED runs its business. This level of participation can be examined on how TED "lets" the public comment and give

constructive criticism on its media content and image. For example, in Sheikha Al Mayassa's TED Talk entitled "Globalizing the Local, Localizing the Global" (2012, February), discussion among the online commentators focused mainly on the opening lines about her conscious and independent choice for wearing a traditional cloak and loose garment *abaya*. It was controversial because of the garment's negative connotations regarding the suppression of women's rights. . Two comments were deleted without information explaining why. But there were still many critics who shared the sentiment that the TED speaker generalized and only talked positively about globalization, and failed to address more complex issues such as the groups of underprivileged women forced to wear the *abaya*.

TED Community can also leverage their access to and participation in TED through TED Conversations. TED declares TED Conversation as the ultimate social media platform for the TED Community to "conversation, collaboration and debate" with over 15 million monthly users in a multilingual environment with the support of commercial giant GE ("About TED Conversations", n.d.). TED Conversations can be linked to the comment section of TED Talk videos, and categorized into "questions, debates and ideas" with certain limited deadlines to ensure discussion can be meaningfully concluded ("About TED Conversations", n.d.).

TED Conversation topics vary from business tips and parenthood to health and technology and philosophy. And once again displaying its hybrid marketing strategy, TED gives this communication platform to its commercial partners. This practice can lead to potential misconduct, such as letting self-promoting commercial content get published on TED's platform, even though it is against TED's independent and impartiality values.

I checked on the advertorial conversation on how to plan a retirement started by none other than the president of Prudential retirement insurance company, Christine Marks("A Conversation with Prudential", n.d.). Although many comments from TED's members are constructive and accommodating, there is a subtle degree of cynicism toward this sponsored conversation. Goedjn Minnow (11 April 2012) bluntly asks,

"This is Prudential's undisguised ad, right? Does Prudential have a mandatory retirement age? If so, why?" Marks (12 April 2012) prudently answered, "By reaching out to the TED community we hope to generate a conversation that leads to new ideas to help us better address retirement challenges". Another TED member Krisztián Pintér (11 April 2012) remarks sincerely about his long analysis of retirement plans, yet he starts with great suspicion: "It is interesting that you represent a firm that offers financial services, yet you ask us how to prepare for retirement. isn't it your expertise?". Marks emphasized his points, tow hich Pintér (12 April 2012) coldly remarks, "I have actually answered to that, but it had been deleted".

TEDx Jakarta's Access and Participation

Through this event, I gathered information about how TEDx Jakarta conducts its hybrid strategy by participating in TED's global community. TEDx Jakarta's community is not only active through its offline gatherings of TEDx events, but also through its online platform of TEDx.com, where the TEDx Talks are published and discussed. Other means of communication include heavy promotion through social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Its mailing list also helps them to grow their community and spread its messages.

They also conform to rules set by TED, and in the end, they are compelled to follow TED's standards and culture. TEDx Jakarta's promotional campaigns, marketing strategies, sponsorship proposal, speaker lineup, and themes are under constant review and subject to the approval of TED's Headquarters team. Like other TEDx members, Aziz (personal communication, 16 August 2011) and his team have to apply for the TEDx license, and it needs to be renewed every time they organize a new event. Thus, it gives TED a considerable degree of control over the legal existence of its communities. Due to the lack of a permanent legal identity, Aziz (personal communication, 16 August 2011) confides that TEDx Jakarta could not collaborate on a permanent basis with other sponsors, and he had to decline an offer from the *Jakarta Globe* newspaper for a weekly column.

TED also controls the agenda setting of TEDx by obliging them to play TED Talk videos as a quarter of TEDx media content. As mentioned earlier, Aziz had to attend a TED Global Conference as a requirement for organizing a TEDx Jakarta event that would involve more then 100 attendees. Aziz elaborated on other obligations:

> They have guidelines that we can download. Basically, we report to them. Our obligations are actually quite a lot. We have to put photos in Twitter. We have to publish our videos. We have to publish blog reports. We have to send feedback directly to TED. (Aziz, personal communication, 2011, August 16)

Aziz (personal communication, 2011, August 16) claimed that the TEDx Jakarta: "Journey to Return" event in 2011 was the closest they could get to TED's template. They adhered to all TED's policies concerned with organizing a TEDx event. From the way the production was set-up, everything was organized and branded as a community. This finding once again shows TED's rather strict control and authority in managing its communities and brand usage.

Furthermore, I compared the result of my observation of TEDx Jakarta with Bailey et al.'s table of access and participation of a community (See *Figure 2.4*). I reflected and categorized the hybrid access and participation of TEDx Jakarta against TED's level of authority as follows:

Production	Reception
Access to the content-producing organization TEDx organizers are allowed to produce and edit their own TEDx Talk videos yet TED will review the videos before publishing them in TED's and TEDx's web sites	*Access to the content considered relevant* TED's members and the public can access TED Talks, TEDx Talks and other content on TED's website for free, and share it in the Internet for non-profit causes. The public can also interpret, comment and debate freely

	on the subjects, but TED has the right to delete racy comments and hate speech ("TED Community", n.d.).
Participation in the produced content TEDx organizers curate their own event's speakers and media content, yet the final list requires approval from TED.	
Participation in the content-producing organization Co-deciding on policy is very limited. TED's HQ has thorough policies regarding their production system and usage of its brand.	TED actively seeks evaluation of its content and feedback from the audience to improve the quality of the videos and its overall project.

Table 7 Access and participation of TEDx community (adapted from Bailey et al., 2008, p. 14)

4.3 TED as Part of Civil Society

Following the findings presented in the previous two subchapters, I further dissect TED's role as a global civil society to add up the multidimensional perspective that understands TED as an alternative media. TED's media activism has transformed the organization into a part of civil society, thereby facilitating the democratization of information and providing the public sphere an alternative platform for social changes. This media activism is best explored through some of TED's projects that generate social impacts in humanitarian, cultural and educational fields. It also manifests itself in TEDx Jakarta's practice as a civil society that empowers local heroes and inspires civilians to join their causes. However, I need to begin with an exploration of how TED's semi-hierarchical organizational structure and its trademark curatorship format affect its civil society function.

4.3.1   Semi-Hierarchical Organizational Structure

The findings in Table 7 emphasize that TED is not entirely a horizontal and non-hierarchical media organization. This brings positive and negative values to the community building and civil society. In a positive sense, TED's authority above its communities and strong brand makes it less dependent on those communities to sustain itself as media organization, and puts it in a more objective position in decision making without being polarized politically or economically. In a negative sense, TED's strong leadership and authority can also overshadow the process of democratization and the leveling down of the hierarchy of access and participation that would limit the community's freedom of expressions. The communities can only partially participate in the production and reception of TED's projects. The communities also need to compromise or adjust its freedom for expression within the corridor determined by TED. The exclusion of comedian Sarah Silverman's racy TED Talk after being discredited by Chris Anderson illustrates this threat (Alex Leo, 2010, April 17). Silverman (2010, February 15) later published her criticisms on Twitter: "Kudos to @TEDChris for making TED an unsafe haven for all!". This incident not only exhibits TED's bias in using its editorial powers, but also their willingness to marginalize certain ideas, even though it claims to be an open source non-elitist movement ("About TED", n.d.). In another light, this finding confirms the premise built by Bailey et al. (2008) regarding the unavoidable continuous power struggle within alternative media and its communities, even though this power imbalance does not stop alternative media from enabling communities to, "co-decide at both the level of media content and organization" (p. 14).

4.3.2   Curatorship and Its Potential Tolls on Democratization

TED is famous for its format of presenting its ideas worth spreading through TED Talks. They also curate the topics and audience attending its offline conferences. Based on my observations at the TEDx Jakarta event, the curatorship process is similar to the editorial process of agenda setting in media organizations. The alluring speaker lines-up engaging yet diverse topics interconnected in the event's main theme with relevance to

the audience, become important factors in organizing a TED-like conference. The profiles of the speakers and the audience attending the TEDx event shows that TEDx Jakarta is a community that would like to develop a communications platform (if not marketplace) where the right people (as in the well-targeted speakers and audience) can meet up, start a dialogue, incubate ideas, reciprocate each other's social action, or simply learn and network. This is the key advantage as well as a limitation of TED's curating culture towards the democratization of the public's access and participation. It can be useful as an editorial, analytical, and matching platform between the speakers and audience to build a corresponding network with higher social impacts. Yet, it can also delineate TED as an elitist global media institution since there is always the probability of certain people and ideas being excluded from its agenda by the main committee, or the most active and powerful members in the community, such as the curators.

This global practice is also emulated at the local level. The TEDx Jakarta: Journey to Return 2011 event was the biggest TEDx event, with more than 700 people attending to see 13 locally curated speakers and performers in a bigger venue, with high security and better facilities than its previous events. Like a big art exhibition, every aspect of the event was curated based on the concept and causes the curators would like to seek, and of course, under TED's general approval. Yet, to dismiss any notion of autocratic practice, Aziz explained that the curatorship in TEDx Jakarta was a growing process toward democracy within the small group of curators:

> Actually the curatorship is growing. At first, it was the three of us with Karina. Then, we found some people that stood up and recruited them to join the curator team. So as far I can see on TEDx Jakarta curatorship, it is dynamic. Of course as we are the curators we can decide the lineups but it is important not to make it too big because everybody will have their own opinions that they will defend fiercely. But there is no veto power. It's all about democratic dialogue for collective vote. One time we even flipped the coin (Aziz, personal communication, 2011, August 16).

In TEDx, the search for speakers focuses mainly on finding inspiring local heroes that would benefit from TED's powerful spotlight, and a desire to attract an audience to join their cause. Aziz (personal communication, 2011, August 16) revealed what he searched for in the speakers, "We looked for local heroes. People that have been famous in their fields but not recognized by common audience and they already did something amazing".

Aziz curated TED based on this vision, and matched the profiles that he believed had the capacity to be the agent of change:

> Also because the tagline is the idea worth spreading, we think of who are the people with potential to spread the ideas they get. Like last year, we invited Yani Panigoro, she was in the position that could help us to spread ideas to people beyond our reach. (Aziz, personal communication, 2011, August 16)

The event promoted inspiring speakers and sending messages of diversity, peace, tolerance and appreciation towards local arts and culture, as well as proposals from environmentalist and technologist to make Indonesia better. The curators unearthed the local heroes who wouldn't usually be covered in mainstream media as well as having celebrated activists to amplify their causes that could be found too radical by the hegemonic mainstream media and state.

The final line-ups were eclectic yet correlated to the philosophical theme it carried of homage to the past to look for the future: The Journey to Return. Its website ("TEDx Jakarta 2011", n.d.) describes as, "…will give you an experience that will take you back; to the past, to your childhood, to common sense, to universal values, to yourself". The profiles of speakers from different fields seemed to be quite random yet they carried the messages of interconnected universal values that could be applied by common people. The curators combined well-known local speakers with obscure heroes. They included legendary transgender dancer Didi Nini Thowok and human rights activist Siti Musdah Mulia who promoted cultural diversity and interfaith dialogue, traditional game expert Zaini Alif who had been active in preserving local

traditional games, and ocean scientist Ridwan Djamaluddin who had built the National Tsunami Early Detection System ("TEDx Jakarta 2011", n.d.) They also invited international speakers such as digital music entrepreneur Derek Sivers and green entrepreneur John Hardy, which helped attract a larger audience and leverage their locality to the international scene.

The wide spread practice of strong networking between the speakers and audience, or within the audience itself during the breaking session in the conference, gave me deep insight on why TEDx organizers are inclined to curate their audience as well. By selecting and targeting the audience with relevant topics and mind opening presentations from the speakers, I found a higher probability for better networking and a bigger impact that could catalyze the process of social change. That is why TEDx Jakarta very carefully selected their audience based on their demographic profile, education, and professional backgrounds. Aziz explained the process:

> Basically on the past event, we decided to curate our audience. That is actually a common practice for TEDx. TEDx, especially TED teach how it curates its audience. So they apply and TED selects them. And it is suggested for us to do so, stated in their guidelines… It was first come first serve. There were 700 hundred people. 200 we reserved for people whom we wanted them to come. So we sent invitations to communities and media, blogs; to show that this idea is really in the press. For example, we sent to educated people (Aziz, personal communication, 2011, August 16).

Nonetheless, the curatorship creates certain unavoidable tolls on the democratization of access and participation, for both the speakers and audience attending the offline conference. The agenda setting implicit in curating certain topics and speakers, as well as selecting the audience based on certain qualifications, always risks excluding the marginalized and under-represented due to lack of means and access. The prestige factor also limited networking in the conference, thereby reinforcing the elitism TED wants to denounce. Aziz understood these challenges very well, as he described the backlash from the rejected applicants that wanted to attend TEDx Jakarta event:

And the feedbacks were various, some reacted funnily, some angry and had bad time about being rejected and they said online. But that made us realized how people took this seriously. Definitely there is a danger of people being deleted (Aziz, personal communication, 2011, August 16).

From my personal experience in applying to attend the TEDx Jakarta 2011 event, I found it very competitive and a kind of survival of the fittest process. The application was accepted only through its website, which systematically excludes the majority of Indonesians on account of the nation's low rate of Internet access. Hence, I observed that most attendees selected were coming from Jakarta and were upper middle class IT savvy youth, who have the highest rate of Internet access in Indonesia. I also had problems in applying online, since its website crashed many times due to high web traffic and enthusiasm from the public.

Furthermore, I had to complete the application form with details of my social, educational, and professional backgrounds, as well as a short cover letter stating why I should be selected as an audience member. After a review process and being selected, my attendance became obligatory to avoid any blacklisting by the organizers for their next event. I still received updates from their mailing list, as well as an invitation to their next event. TEDx Jakarta not only curates their audience through this selective process, but it also uses the information for their database and presumably their future exclusive networking. TEDx Jakarta bridges the audience access gap through the online publication of TEDx Talks and more offline screenings and TEDx events.

In both the global and local contexts, TED and TEDx cannot escape from the critiques rising around its closed editorial system and biased curatorship. On its latest attempt to address this issue, TED tries to democratize the recruitment process, and opens more access for people around the world to become TED speakers. Through the TED 2013 Worldwide Talent Search, TED crowd-sources half of the speakers for the upcoming TED2013 Conference: "The Young, The Wise, The Undiscovered" (Tedstaff, 2012, January 31). In collaboration with TEDx organizers, TED conducts auditions in 14 cities on six continents, and uses online application to reach more potential speakers. In

some special cases, TED will also cover the travel costs ("Announcing Global Talent Search", n.d.). The selected candidates' video talks are published for online voting by the public, and the winners will be groomed to meet TED's presentation format ("Talent Search", n.d.).

For the first time, TED reveals how it curates and seeks speakers with certain profiles, such as "The Inventor, The Teacher, The Prodigy, The Artist, The Performer, The Sage, The Enthusiast, The Change Agent, The Storyteller, The Spark" ("Talent Search", n.d.). TED also explicitly rejects certain speaker profiles that can harm and discredit it, including "Product-hawkers, jargon-junkies, dullards, wafflers, motivator wannabes, self-promoters, spouters of new-age fluff" " ("Talent Search", n.d.). The major confinements are the speaker has to talk in English and travel to the nearest city to do the auditions. This policy is elitist and discriminately limiting the chance for the non-English speakers to join. It presents how TED still under represents certain groups in its media production process.

4.3.3   TED's Activism for Social Changes

In this section, I would like to explore several case studies of TED's activism in prompting social changes. These case studies represent TED's core focus as a civil society that spreads ideas for educational ends, which then branches out to other humanitarian and cultural works. As alternative media, TED also has the position to exercise its civil society function of watching the mainstream media in relation to keeping the power balance between the state, market, and mainstream media. Since its original incarnation, TED has been designed as an alternative medium for people to network and share ideas and innovations that aren't covered in the mainstream media. TED is not a radical alternative media with an extreme political mission focused on toppling hegemonic powers. Instead, TED collaborates with those powers to empower the marginalised and revolutionize the system from within. TED continues to find ways to connect the world and bring change by developing a robust platform for crowdsourcing and an interconnected knowledge network. Therefore, with its global network, resources, and collaboration with the rest of the players in the media, TED has

the potential to live up to its ideal civic values of changing the world through spreading ideas.

TED for Humanitarian and Cultural Ends

TED's passion for promoting human welfare and social reforms through people's collaboration and spreading alternative and inspiring ideas has been projected in every activity. TED brings the collaboration to another level by making it open, global, and inclusive for working with the government, mainstream media, commercial and non-commercial organizations, and simple civilians. Recently, TED is moving further to serve the global community in an ambitious project, TED Prize 2012. Chris Anderson (2012, March 2) described a large collaboration project called City 2.0 in his blog in the *Huffington Post*. In this project, TED exercises its civil society role to catalyze, encourage governments, empower common citizens, and the market to redesign city planning and infrastructure into a sustainable and innovative urban living space through global collaboration and crowdsourcing:

> Yesterday at TED2012, we granted this year's TED Prize not to a person, but to a big idea: the City 2.0. The city of tomorrow. And as part of that prize we're launching a new online platform. It will allow citizens around the world to connect with their neighbors and get to work re-imagining the cities in which they live. And it will allow visionary companies and organizations to share tools and resources to empower those grassroots efforts. The dream is to create cities where innovation, inclusiveness, health, soul and opportunity come together to reset the trajectory of the human race…Partner with other concerned citizens around you. Get started with building your own City 2.0 (Anderson, 2012, March 2)

TED is also gearing up to transform the rich skills and resources of its global network into real social actions that make differences. Through TEDxChange, TED collaborates with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to spread awareness about health and

development issues to its TEDx communities, and help formulate action plans for social change. It describes itself as:

> The TEDxChange team works with TEDx organizers around the world to help facilitate meaningful discussions on topics such as vaccines, polio, malaria, HIV/AIDS, maternal and newborn child health, and agricultural development. The TEDxChange initiative also includes a global signature event convened by Melinda Gates and broadcast across the TEDx community. ("About TEDx - TEDxChange", n.d.).

According to Melinda Gates (Gates Foundation, 2010, November 29), TEDxChange tries to transform TEDsters' mindset from "ideas worth spreading" to "ideas worth doing". It also emphasizes on the urgency to raise awareness and take action for positive change. Gates (2010, October) does not shy away from adapting a profit-driven marketing strategy from Coca Cola to create a campaign about raising awareness and distributing condoms, sanitation and vaccinations.

In parallel with TEDxChange, TED Prizes also aims to produce significant social changes that are realized through TED Prize's winner's wishes. These results are updated a year after the wish to see tangible change. People can track the progress of these winners' projects in their blogs and on TED's websites, as well as participate according to their interest and expertise. For example, TED Prize Winner 2007 Bill Clinton's ambitious wish was to help the Rwandan Government through his foundation with "*high quality rural health system for the whole country*", and has so far resulted in new hospitals, holistic medical facilities, and community health worker training for all 30 districts requested by Rwandan government ("TED Prize: 2007 Winners", n.d.). TED Prize Winner 2008 Karen Armstrong's wish to create and launch The Charter for Compassion that promotes interfaith peace and freedom between religions was unveiled on November 12, 2009 with help from TED and also religious leaders, non-profit organizations, and commercial advertising companies such as Ogilvy to market the campaign ("TED Prize: 2008 Winners", n.d.).

TED for Educational Ends

In its recent initiatives to revolutionize the education world, TED launched its new project called TED ED, which is dubbed as "Lessons Worth Sharing" ("Introducing TED ED", n.d.). Following a similar format as TED Talks with a duration of less than 18 minutes, TED ED differentiates itself by making educational videos with graphic animations instead of live speakers ("Introducing TED ED", n.d.). TED is attempting to provide the public with more active roles as social change agents and more participation in content production. TED enforces its open collaboration culture through crowdsourcing the search and match tasks for animators and educators ("Introducing TED ED", n.d.). With similar educational spirit, TED Prize Winner 2010 Jamie Oliver wishes for a food revolution through eradicating the junk food culture and educating people (especially children) to build a sustainable food culture and healthy eating habits. He plans to have a "traveling food theater" to teach kids and parents easy healthy cooking, building a network of community kitchens, and an online support community to fight against obesity ("2010 TED Prize Winner", n.d.).

Another eloquent illustration of TED's mission for education is TEDx University, which puts TED-like conferences in traditional education environments. TEDxKinnaird was organized in an all-girls college in Pakistan, and attendance was open for both sexes. It initially sparked controversy and considered as deviant from local norms, but it did not dampen the enthusiasm of a wide-range of speakers from students, teachers, political commentators, HR managers, and an audience of students and professionals to discuss the future of Pakistan ("Events at Universities", n.d.).

4.3.4 TEDx Jakarta for Social Changes

The works discussed above are not solely TED's. In many cases, these initiatives are coming from local communities. TEDx organizers around the world have been replicating TED's projects and improving them to meet local needs. TEDx Jakarta's events and projects embody this strategy.

In this subchapter I argue that TEDx Jakarta has the potential, as well as the challenge, to become an agent for social change. Its potential lies in its growing support network, as well as constructive partnerships with the sponsors and mainstream media. It can provide an alternative voice and channel that fills the void in local civil society ecosystem by raising marginalized issues and local heroes. In the long run, TEDx Jakarta also aims for social mobilization and significant social changes.

However, its dependency on TED's leadership and its reproduction of a TED-like format also bring down the challenges and threats that TED faces to the local context. Currently, the curatorship process limits TEDx Jakarta's events to Jakarta's elite social class. Even though there are several social actions taken by members of this elite community after attending TEDx Jakarta events, in the shorter term, TEDx Jakarta still struggles to translate its networking and idea sharing into significant social changes. I discuss these issues further in the following paragraphs. First section talks about whether TEDx actually eliminates or contrarily nourish elitism in TED. Second section explores how TEDx Jakarta translates the "ideas worth spreading" to social changes.

TEDx as the Contested Answer to Elitism

TEDx is famously known as one of TED's means to spread democratic participation by levelling down hierarchical structures and leveraging local communities to organize and replicate its format for local causes. Putri claimed that TEDx is the complementary, crucial key in making TED more democratic, horizontal and accessible to the rest of the world, especially in marginalized communities:

> I am amazed with the idea of TEDx. I think TEDx is a genius idea because it answers things being accused to TED like being too elitist, westernized, aloof, not grounded. So TEDx completes that (Putri, personal communication, 2011, August 16).

This statement also implies that TEDx can be a grounded and localized social agent whilst still connected to TED's global community and media organization. Yet a certain

level of exclusivity remains from TED's curatorship practices. It reflects the demographic profile of the final audience coming to the TEDx Jakarta 2011 event. They are mostly aspiring young executives, activists, local celebrities, and university students from upper middle class Jakartans (with some coming from other big cities in Indonesia). The speak English fluently, are IT savvy, are very much into the latest technological trends, interested in entertainment and design, and can afford to have the sustainable lifestyle idealized in TED. I come from this demographic, and not surprisingly, I unintentionally met up with the networks of my high school and university friends and their colleagues during the event. It is a small, exclusive network filtered out of a population of 240 million Indonesians. TEDx Jakarta events can be considered a democratic public sphere, but mostly just for the locale elites.

In a more positive light, the curated audience resulted in filtered elites who could be influential game changers. These locale elites are expected to be powerful social agents that can make a bigger impact on society through the networking and exercising of their privileged access to information and infrastructure, as well as their own resources and skills. Through this event, TEDx Jakarta has attempted to connect the right audience and speakers to build collaborations and networks. National media and blog coverage also put the event on the radar of national events. The sponsors included big companies like BMW and local startups and coffee shops, which added to the atmosphere of prestige yet informal networking to the community. Many people came from other cities and from overseas to participate. Stories about people rushing to register online were a trending topic in social media and became an effective promotion for the event. Many people that were not selected turned to social media to express their disappointment, which increased the hype and prestige of the event. Countering the critics, TEDx Jakarta attempted to be democratic by giving away entrance tickets free, and on a first come first serve basis. Aziz indicated that one of the reasons for limiting the size of the audience was not because of elitism, but rather a strict security policy and seating capacity set by the venue organizer (personal communication, 2011, August 16). Aziz also emphasized how TEDx Jakarta is very community driven, and the organizers count on unpaid volunteers to realize the event and the speakers are coming for free ("TEDx Jakarta-Anies Baswedan-Lighting Up Indonesia's Future", n.d.).

But under critical view, instead of being a rebuttal to elitism, TEDx Jakarta with its curatorship actually extends the elitist practice of TED to the local level. It generates local elitism within TED's existing elitism. TEDx Jakarta is viable to be a self-content elitist community that produces hip event for learning and exclusive networking without substantial progress to social changes. Thus, it is important to see if TEDx Jakarta manages to translate these ideas sharing to positive social impacts.

Transforming Ideas to Social Changes

Benjamin Wallace (26 February 2012) discusses the emotional and intellectual appeal of TED. He quotes one TEDx member on how ideas spread and the general effect from attending such a conference as "these events make you feel intellectually and emotionally elevated. There's research about how if you hear a good idea, you feel as if you're part of the co-creation of it" (Wallace, 2012, February 26). I noticed the solidarity and support from the audience towards the local speakers in sharing and affirming their ideas. The enthusiastic audience was very appreciative and responding to the presentations quite positively. It became not only a forum of education, but also a rare chance to accolade these local heroes, as well as a communal celebration of local cultures, experiences, and the interconnectedness of knowledge. Putri Minangsari, a travel writer and TEDx Jakarta participant, also commended the spirit of the event and was awed by her fellow Jakartans on how they were, "hunger for progress, knowledge, for change for this country to grow to be better" (Hapsoro, 2012, April 7).

Nevertheless, the importance in translating the discussions and networking into concrete actions was what Scott Hanna, co-founder of a non-profit initiative to donate books to Indonesian children, remarks: "The speakers are interesting but I think what is more important are the conversations that take place outside, online and afterward. The connections at the event, especially among bright young Indonesians eager to make a better tomorrow." (Hapsoro, 2012, April 7). I also brought up this subject of mobilization towards social change to Aziz. Aziz previously related how the interconnectedness of knowledge and universal wisdom of the crowds facilitated by TED was the main force for him to adopt TED's conference style into his community.

However, he confessed that TEDx Jakarta had not yet mobilized people for active social changes. He felt that it simply focused on grabbing people's attention to learn from the ideas being shared:

It's great if we can go for mobilization. But firstly the purpose, it's more about learning. If you check the video of Robinson, the objective is not to make more people aware of education per se, but taking the wisdom of education from him that I can apply in consulting, engineering or farming. How do you use this knowledge to make more impacts from your work with more impacts (Aziz, personal communication, 2011, August 16)

Thus, TEDx Jakarta still mostly plays its role as a catalyst and a medium for connecting people rather than an active agent for social mobilization. Putri pointed out that TEDx Jakarta's mimicry of TED's practices had connected people and facilitated the incubation of ideas:

TEDx Jakarta just like TED is endeavoring to be the place for exchanging idea and inspiring people. If audience from TED or TEDx Jakarta can meet and make something, that is great, we support that. For example, Edward Suhadi's project (Putri, personal communication, 2011, August 16)

Edward Suhadi's film documentary project is an example of how an effective TEDx event can connect the right resources and turn the ideas into social actions. Edward Suhadi is known mostly for his work as a professional high-end wedding photographer. He was attending one of TEDx's events and listening to a TEDx Talk by Anies Baswedan, a celebrated academic, about his initiatives on Indonesia Mengajar (Indonesia Teaches). It is a one-year teaching assignment program in the most remote and poorest areas of Indonesia, and is done by the brightest young talents to improve the quality of the national education system. Anies Baswedan promoted this cause through the TEDx Jakarta event. Baswedan's message (2011, November 19) has been re-illustrated with an informative animation and has been viewed by more than ten thousand people on YouTube. TEDx Jakarta also connected what seemed to be random

people together and work for their causes. Edward was so inspired and motivated to support the organization by helping to disseminate its message through his film documentary production. With his wife, he went to the remote area of the Indonesian archipelago to film the young teachers' activities. Edward (2011, August 13) thanked TEDx Jakarta for introducing him to this cause by making a short trailer of his film documentary, "This is a short video I made for the good people of TEDxJakarta that inspired my life-changing trip". This trailer was also shown at the TEDx Jakarta 2011 event to inspire more crowds to take social action.

Another example of media activism as part of the TEDx Jakarta event is how it facilitates the development of networks and platforms for uncommon speakers such as Ewa Wojkowska. Wojkowska (2011, October 5) was promoting her non-profit organization "Kopernik", which develops online markets for cheap sustainable technologies, without the need to be hassled by corrupt bureaucracies and an unhelpful government. After her talk, the audience was given the chance to mingle and discuss with Ewa and other speakers about their initiatives.

Aziz also conveyed TEDx Jakarta's future plans and ambitions for reaching upper-class markets and more grassroots speakers and audiences, which seems to be in accordance with TED's initiatives in leveling down the hierarchy and bridging the social economy gaps to be able to represent the oppressed and marginalized:

> We want to go across the market like we said. We'd like to facilitate the transformation of inspirations to actions. It can be as simply as inventing a platform that connect our audience with our speakers. Beginning this year we had a summit for the strategy for the whole year. We realized we were targeting the same market. Middle class, up to 25-35 years old, young executives. There were two ideas we were thinking: trying to reach the upper market and the market below. So we are planning to make a big TEDx Jakarta event for audience from leading people and experts in the industries in business, government, media, education etc. In longer term, we'd like to reach audience at the bottom of pyramid, the poor people. And the speakers are coming from the

same social groups that successfully make impacts. We don't have definite plan but that is our vision for near future (Aziz, personal communication, 2011, August 16)

These action plans demonstrates TEDx Jakarta's vision to be more established and the growing civil society across social, economic, and cultural backgrounds that empowers the public as well as promotes democracy and further social changes. Yet in order to realize this vision, TEDx Jakarta needs to grow its network outside its current comfort zone of middle class youth and eradicate the local elitism.

4.4 Threats and Challenges

There are challenges and critiques from many parties over TED's style and branding as alternative media, and these have been reported by both established mainstream media and its alternative media peers. The trend of building a public sphere from conferences of ideas and innovations is historically rooted in the early years of Habermas' salon-like public sphere through many kinds of discourse that competes with TED. Wallace describes famous and respected conferences for targeted audiences, from the Davos Forum to more eclectic offerings such as PopTech, FOO Camp, the Clinton Global Initiative, Solve for X, and many others. These conferences grow rapidly in competition with TED to provide the best platform for sharing ideas. Wallace (2012, February 26) revels in their similar 'mission' that presents a real critique to this phenomenon, "All promise much the same thing: a velvet rope to keep out the attitudinally unwashed, serendipitous interaction, quirky content, and at least the illusion of egalitarian elbow-rubbing." This statement implicates the following challenges TED faces in keeping its integrity as part of a civil society and democratization process toward social change.

4.4.1 Inconspicuous Consumption of Social Distinction through Elitist Network and Hype

Based on Thorstein Veblen's (1994) famous term of "conspicuous consumption" for social status differentiation, French Sociologist Jean Baudrillard (1998) reframes it as "inconspicuous consumption", which refers to the advanced processes of social status

differentiation and the maintenance of the status quo of the dominant social class through igniting prestige over intangible commodities. The currency of prestige is no longer money but being able to be part of the network of intellectual elites, hence the market demands for exclusive conferences such as TED. As Wallace (2012, February 26) illustrates, money is no longer the currency for expressing the social status and rank of the affluent and influential elite, it is attending intellectual conferences and networks. TED speaker David Brooks (Wallace, 2012, February 26) adds the important value of networking, "For me, it's the chance to get out of my political-pundit circle and meet people I wouldn't otherwise meet. There are psychic rewards."

The exclusive golden ticket of social prestige is controlled by access for mingling and building networks amongst the brightest and the most powerful in the world through these conferences. TED has built itself a strong brand at these conferences , which benefit its network and members by providing a wider and more effective podium to spread their causes. Nonetheless, this reputation and integrity are also causing further elitism that Chris Anderson tries to play down. This elitism replicates itself in its mini localized form of TEDx. I interpreted Aziz's comment about the benefit of being in TED's community as a supporting statement on the growing elitism and higher social status amongst the local communities:

> It's all about the network that you build. It's all about the exposure you get. It's all about the reputation. Oh, he's a volunteer in TEDx. Oh, he's part of the TEDx team. It's about the brand. So I think it has a lot to do with radical benefits. (Aziz, personal communication, August 16, 2011)

Putri also pointed out the value in networking at TED Global Conferences:

> Personally, I always question the idea why we have to pay for going to the conference while it's free to watch the video. I think because the value for people who come is the network as the ultimate defining experience. (Putri, personal communication, August 16, 2011)

The prestigious prize that enhances one's social status is the network of important and powerful people, a network where access is limited to how much money and intellectual and professional qualifications meet TED's standards Then, this seemingly harmless culturing, nurturing, and enlightening moment of inconspicuous consumption should be further reemphasized and amplified in the name of democratization. Or as Wallace (2012, February 26) sharply puts, "Create a Boom Boom Room that not only won't let you in but also videocasts what's happening inside so you'll know exactly what you're missing".

The demographic of the growing elites is disclosed through a leaked TED's attendee list in 2008. TED's curatorship is moving towards inviting people who got caught in TED's hype phenomenon, and would like to exploit it to climb social ladders by networking with the smart people on top. This condition compromises the authenticity of the interactions, that according to Wallace's report (2012, February 26), are caused by TED's decision to change its once well-curated audience of the affluent and highly intellectuals to social climbers. The growing elitism in these global conferences is best summed up by Wallace (2012, February 26):"But most simply, these events are about establishing and reinforcing new hierarchies". This motive of being part of the elite may undermine the curating quality and priority of giving a chance to the under-represented social agents.

4.4.2 Whose Ideas Worth Spreading? Ideological Bias and Heavy Representations of the Dominant Global North

TED's ideology has often been questioned as bias towards its roots as a commercial conference with Northern, capitalist values. On top of that, Wallace (2012, February 26) mentioned the missionary upbringing of Chris Anderson also influenced the strong secular evangelism of TED's way of spreading the idea parallels the spreading of religions. Bailey et.al (2008) apprise the quandary faced by TED as revolving around breaking through the dominance of its own ideology in representing its diverse communities and interests: "…at the level of representation that tensions and difficulties, such as the dominance of civil society representatives from the West and for

the expert knowledge to be taken seriously at an international level of governance, are exposed" (p. 151).

By revisiting Sheikha Al Mayassa's TED Talk entitled "Globalizing the Local, Localizing the Global", I looked at one outstanding critic on TED's curatorship and topics. It came from Athena Lam, a TEDx activist that could represent the growing challenge that TED is facing. She criticizes how TED has become too mainstream and less radical or alternative, as well as not representative enough in curating its topics:

> I can't help but wonder if the curation of the TED Talks is too mainstream, and without enough reflexive ability to challenge tough and controversial ideas. How much of TED is really just reinforcing a community of people who generally agree on mainstream issues - despite the diverse occupations and sectors? Is it innovation within the box of a particular way of thinking? How is this talk challenging the mainstream (Western) view of how development is going in a particular region? Yes, it lends credibility that it's someone within the region, but I often wonder, if TED would have selected a speaker from the region that argued for something radically on the other view.

> For me, my bone to pick is the heavy bias towards education (definitely one of my greatest interest), poverty reduction, scientific discoveries, women (but not gender as a larger issue). Until I see a talk that addresses gender and sexual identity issues, and other controversial social issues, I feel that TED is not realizing its full potential of truly being a platform of innovative ideas - which begins with open dialogue and challenges from all sides, whether TED agrees or not. An idea worth spreading is the continual commitment to finding peripheral discourses, and neglected narratives. (Lam, 2012, February 9)

Lam's remarks complements yet discredits TED in three general aspects: of TED being more plural than diverse in its content; more self-content in its "mainstream" (Western) view than living up to its vision to challenge hegemony and address alternative views;

and more partial togiving access to opinions and information that is in accordance with TED's views rather than being open and providing both sides of the issue.

In addressing these three points, I dissected pluralism versus diversity of content and its relation to countering hegemonic views by giving balanced perspectives in TED. TED's mision to be the "clearing house" for open interconnected knowledge brings ambiguity in terms of the rich quantity and quality of its content ("About TED", n.d.). I referred to pluralism in order to explain how media content can use vast quantities ofdiverse information in order to describe how media content can be high quality representations of different subjects,and provide holistic, multidimensional views. TED is a plural alternative media with a massive quantity record on its content distribution, including more than 1.000 TED Talks that have been seen by more than 500 million views and TED has 1000+ TEDx ("Is TED Elitist?"; "Talks", n.d.).

Ongoing criticisms doubt that the diversity TED envisions in its content is similar in reality. Even though TED themes range to multiple disciplines and multicultural topics, the quality of its content can be quite mainstream and hegemonic with alternative and innovative repackaging of the TED format. This argument stems from Lam's concern of Al Mayassa's TED Talk and what she represents. Al Mayassa comes from Qatar's elite, is the daughter of the Emir of Qatar and a Duke University graduate, is a philanthropist and at the vanguard of promoting Qatar's art and culture to the world, especially the Western sphere (The Economist, 2012, March 31). Not only does she represent the positive progress of globalizing Qatar's local culture and localizing global values to Qatar's modern life, but also the upper class modern Arab women that the hegemonic Western society wants to see. Looking through a more critical perspective, her art project of bringing the Tribeca New York Film Festival franchise to Qatar (Al Mayassa, 2012, February) is by no means any different from bringing American global brands such as McDonald's and Starbucks to a new market and labeling it as progress and modernization. What implicates the subject of the matter in terms of diversity in TED is that TED prefers to accommodate such empowering talk from the elite, as well as providing the stage to alternative and critical views that are mostly marginalized and do

not have the access and or platform for expression. This case nonetheless, questions TED's real ideology and alternative point of view.

From the local and on-the-field perspective of TEDx Jakarta, Aziz defended TED's ideology as a system of belief based on universal global value that actually supplement, amplify, and empower the local social agents to make more of an impact on society:

> It's like think global act local. I don't think it is Americanized. People think America is one idea, yet there is a lot of backwardness in America as well. I think TED is global with global view. If there is bias, it would be bias for global or international. What I like about TEDx in complementing TED is that how extremely local they can be. But the wisdom you get is universal. Didi Nini Thowok came with local content but the thinking is very international. (Aziz, personal communication, 2011, August 16)

From Aziz's argument, he believed the glocalization of TED actually escalates locals desire to disseminate their messages through the international medium. His statement also implies a larger power, initiative, and authority of local community in defining and participating in TED for their own causes with bigger social impacts. By putting the TEDx Talk videos on the Internet under the strong banner of TED and its pervasive resources, the local heroes from the South have an equal chance with their other counterparts in the North to represent themselves to the world. Referring back to Lam's criticism, her comment is published in TED and so far has not been omitted. This shows constructive learning and democratic management by TED. Thus, TED is evolving and balancing its power and authority in defining its practices by giving more power to its communities to debate and reshape TED's cultural and political identity.

4.4.3   Commodification of Ideas

The threat of commercialism has been discussed repeatedly in this study. Furthermore, the process of making ideas worth spreading in a very competitive marketplace of global conferences is apparently risking the dissemination of ideas to saturation and commodification. In the interview with Benjamin Wallace from *New York* Magazine,

Andrew Zolli, PopTech's executive director and a competitor of TED explains the realistic details of the overexploited repetitive market of ideas:

> Then it becomes: 'Whose curation, whose guests, whose audience is better?'☐"
> Or, "What's happening to the whole category is it's all becoming commoditized.
> The secret sauce has been fully digested. There's a general feeling of replication
> and fatigue. Most of this conference explosion will die (Wallace, 2012, February
> 26)

Wallace (2012, February 26) further describes the tough internal competition in making certain ideas and speakers pass TED's curatorship process with audience approval. Speakers are refining their techniques, creativity, and aesthetic in delivering their ideas towards TED's template, and competing for raising the most awareness from the audience. A practice that seems to be approved by Anderson's concept of accelerated innovation and TED's newest policy of only posting in its website the talks with highest audience ratings. The danger of this rating-based publishing system is ironically making TED similar to the editorial practice of commercial mainstream media, and leaving out marginal ideas of social groups that do not have the power and resources to access or participate, let alone to vote for their voices to be heard. Thus, it can implicate the level of democratization and the priorities of minorities' representations in TED.

V CONCLUSION

TED's recent stratospheric rise to a social phenomenon in redefining global networking and ways to spread ideas is worth of academic and scientific attention for what it augurs. TED embodies the latest development of alternative media by juxtaposing itself as a hybrid civil society that balances the power dynamic between the state, the market and mainstream media in serving the community and supporting democracy. This hybrid approach signifies that TED is more of a revolutionary network-based global movement that willingly collaborates with other social agents. TED negotiates with mainstream hegemonic values and infuses its alternative counter-hegemonic views into the system. This amalgamation also reflects how alternative media have changed from their classic framework of radical social movement with extreme opposition against the hegemonic power (Downing et al., 2011; Atton, 2002).

By transforming itself from an elitist commercial-based global conference for the powerful and affluent into a non-profit media organization dedicated to making an open world for free information and education through an offline and online global network, TED tries to break the institutional and established structures of power. But TED does not carry out this shift to non-profit by denying its past as a media organization that was confined to the dominant mainstream media and market driven practices. Instead, TED blends both ways into a hybrid form of collaboration between the mainstream and the alternative.

It is already very complicated to differentiate TED completely as part of alternative media against mainstream media. Or more precisely, TED is experimenting within the grey area of the dichotomy of alternative and mainstream. There are several contradictions that depict this complexity. First, TED identifies itself as part of alternative media through its rejection of commercial ends, thriving for humanitarian and democratic causes yet it adopts traditional values of mainstream media enterprise management such as advertisement or sponsorships and semi hierarchical agenda setting process. Second, TED values as well as criticizes the professional practices of mainstream media. It applies mainstream media's editorial system in its curatorship,

advertisement as source of funding and employs dedicated professionals to its main organizations. But it also encourages crowd sourcing of local content and resources as well as voluntary participations from non-professionals and its community members in building its identity, best practices and network. Third, TED is not state-owned nor it is a private commercial company yet it cannot deny it is dependant financially on its commodification of its branding, exclusive networking, TED Conferences as well as sponsorships from commercial corporations. Fourth, despite of its strength in managing a huge array of human resources – from different communities, professional staffs, curators and influential members to volunteers – by applying an open interconnected network culture; TED is still retaining semi structural and semi hierarchical decision-making and editorial authority with the TED Headquarter team. By still having a centralized authority, it wants to empower its community to be independent and free to localize TED's content but too afraid to lose control on its branding usage. Thus, these contradictions lead to a concept of non-profit franchise which may sound very oxymoronic yet true about TED's hybrid approach.

In the following subchapters, I connect this premise to answer my initial research questions and sub-questions. I elaborate in two subchapters to answer the research questions. First subchapter dwells on TED's political, economic, social and cultural characteristics as alternative media. In the second subchapter, I summarize the key findings from the previous chapter to answer the research sub questions and provide illustrations of the latest trends of alternative media.

5.1 TED's Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Characteristics

Initially, I positioned TED in the dichotomy of alternative and mainstream media to show how TED differs from the traditional established mainstream media in its organizational structures, operations, media activism, access to and participation from public. However, I later on discovered that TED's media practices blurred the distinction between mainstream and alternative media. I also dissected TED as part of civil society and found that it partners with the market and mainstream media in serving the community. These results show that TED is a complex multilayered media with

continual flexible interplay and collaboration with the mainstream media, state and market. I deduced them as evidences of TED's hybrid and contingent identity as alternative media.

5.1.1 TED is Contingent and Rhizomatic

In attempt to conclude the key findings of TED's open, contingent and hybrid political cultural approach and answer the research question, the term 'rhizomatic' best describes these traits TED has. The terminology of rhizomatic can be understood based on Bailey et al.'s adaptation (2008) to decipher contingence and mobile nature of contemporary alternative as negotiating between conforming to and resisting the hegemony, rhizome-like network that endorses "A heterogeneous, non-hierarchical and ever-changing network…connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity, signifying rupture, cartography and decalcomania" (p.164). But the findings exhibit that TED has modified significantly the non-hierarchical element. In its media practices, TED prefers to maintain a semi-hierarchical power structure, which allows TED to be the pivotal authority of the network. The following sections explain how TED embodies these elements of rhizome.

Heterogeneous and Contingent Network in Semi-Hierarchical Power Structure

In comparison with other relatively more radical alternative media like IMC (Independent Media Center, i.e. Indymedia), TED has quite similar type of network-based community that spreads across different country borders, cultures and social political beliefs. Philosophically, TED's network is supposed to be built with freedom of having different views and platform for dialogue (or debate) over any issue in a democratic fashion. This idea carries the spirit of what the TED Speaker Sheikha Al Mayassa (2012, February) poignantly says on her TED Talk on intercultural network, "We don't want to be all the same, but we do want to understand each other". Al Mayassa adds the more global the world becomes, the more different people want to be (2012, February).

On the surface, TED's network is non-hierarchical which builds assumption that everybody is deemed as equal in expressing ideas and opinions. Even though TED Talk's format is a short monologue from the speakers and it is one-way communication of ideas; audience always seems enthusiastic and mesmerized (or inspired). This kind of atmosphere projects rather a self-congratulatory (and latently less critical) learning process and seminar. Thus, TED designs its online platform to help bridge the gap in access and participation by generating dialogues in its social media forums, TED Talk video comment posts and TED Conversations. TED also has been popularly known for generously giving away most of its content through publishing its TED Talk videos through the internet under the Creative Common license where people are allowed use TED's materials with attribution, unchanged and for non-commercial purposes. These online community features are expected to bring the ideas from TED Talk into another level of debate and hopefully can trigger social change.

However, a deeper look into the network finds that there is still a hierarchical structure of power that limits community's access and participation in TED. This finding shows a different picture of what on the surface a very democratic and non-hierarchical relationship between the members and TED as the main organization. The following illustration supports this premise.

Less than a decade, TED's network has expanded exponentially and globally through its global conferences and online platform. The popularity of these two means also spur growing independent initiatives from local communities to reproduce the TED format of idea sharing, serving the community and crowdsource the right knowledge and skills in organizing a social movement. TED is quickly responding by licensing its TEDx event that makes it possible for TED to control the dissemination of information and the usage of its branding, filter the speaker lineup and themes, standardize meticulously the format of the event and give detailed directions regarding how the video should be shot into TED-driven templates. TED's headquarters also have the right to select the best TEDx videos that meet TED's content and technical parameters. TED's team also moderates and manages TED Conversation and TED Community that enable them to

delete comments they consider inappropriate and add or remove credit points of its members.

Here, certain practical and operational needs for hierarchy that endorses centralized authority cannot be completely avoided and separate TED from the non-pivotal Indymedia's network that is arguably more democratic in its radicalism. Victor Pickard's study (2009, p. 316) on Indymedia's shows that the radical democratic network known for its positive values in endorsing, "radical egalitarianism as defined by inclusivity, plurality, diversity, openness, transparency and accountability" would eliminate the hierarchical structures in the organizations.

But IMC also imposed certain defectiveness in everyday and policy-based executions of projects as the branch organizations have the right to veto any consensual decision made by IMC conferences of all its organizations without any authority from any main organization to rule it (Pickard, 2009). Pickard (2009) picks a delicate case of financial support plan from Ford Foundation for IMC global network that was vetoed by IMC Argentina partially as it saw taking the money from the foundation would undermine IMC principles. This decision singles out radical democracy's weak point in consensus decision making within a large global network and its lack of single point of authority to govern and apply the policy and procedures towards the whole network whether it's global or local (Pickard, 2009, p. 316).

TED historically was established as a one-time event and then a singular annual global conference in Monterey, California before Sappling Foundation took over the management and moved the headquarters to New York. Yet the basic premise of highest control in TED's headquarter is never contested whilst TED's networks grow heterogeneously and relatively semi-hierarchical in its hierarchy of access and authorization. TED's HQ managed by Sappling Foundation team is the main brain and policy maker as well as the police of the whole online and offline media activism. Unlike IMC Argentina and other IMC's other local branches, TED's global communities cannot veto the decisions made by TED's HQ around the financial sources

coming from Sappling Foundation, donors and commercial sponsors. In fact, TED's HQ can reevaluate TEDx organizers' decision in using certain sponsors.

Even though TED controls strictly the release of licenses (they have to be renewed for new event), monitors closely and has the final say in editing and publishing its related materials, it mostly have maintained transparency in its policies and given space for the local communities to creatively interpret its policy for the benefit of their interests. This tweak of hierarchy and authority revises the earlier more restrictive and theoretical concept of what kind of rhizomatic media organization TED is and distinguishes it from the rest of alternative media. By being semi-hierarchical, TED also denies full participation and equal power for the community in deciding TED's policy and changing its structure. In line with Pateman's categorization (1970), TED currently only allows partial participation from its community. This finding also proves Carpentier's notion (2011) of false sense of full audience participation caused by the impression of egalitarianism in Internet. TED.com with its social media features have nourish the conception that TED's community can access and participate fully. In reality, TED members have limited access to media production, consumption and distribution. TED's monopoly of power without any proper check-and-balance practice from its community can also lead to ideological bias and compromise its heterogeneous network.

Decalcomania or Replication of Shared Narrative

Hybridism in TED manifests through the combination of old school anarchic fanzine movement of distributing photocopied materials (Atton, 2002) with the new media approach that allows the traditional practice of "decalcomania" reinvented and shared in a rhizomatic network. Decalcomania is referred in art scene as a replication technique where a copy of engravings or print can be transferred to other material. In TED's context, decalcomania can refer to TED's philosophy in sharing the wisdom of the crowds through its signature template of monologue-based conference of innovative ideas that ignites further dialogues or actions with the audience and let others to replicate the platform locally based on their interests and social conditions. This particular emulation is less based on ideology than TED's principles of "ideas worth

spreading". "Ideas worth spreading" is the shared narrative that binds the global network and local communities together in their different beliefs, interpretations and purposes. Whether you are in free TEDx event in the poorest slum in Africa or in a paid elite global conference in some northern sphere country with strict audience selection and curatorship process, you are sharing the common thread of narration and template.

TEDx is now a common global offline and online network sharing interests and ideas that make nation-state and geographical boundaries irrelevant. The Internet plays major role in supporting the offline event and connecting the groups through the website, TEDx Talk video sharing and online forums. With each region having its own representatives and high mobility of TEDx member in collaborating with other TEDx group, TEDx has become itself a global community initiated by the public itself, building its own best practice yet still incorporating without reluctance under TED's wing. An example of how TEDx has become globalized is apparent in many cases such as TEDx people from Japan visiting a TEDx Jakarta event to give support and learn from the current event. They came by their own self-funding and self-interest, unrelated to TED's headquarters, yet still carried the identity of being a TED enthusiast and practiced TED's ritual of networking and sharing ideas.

The question thus arises if TED's ideological coherence becomes the main bond that ties these diversified communities or simply TED's media format is providing an effective platform that public can use for their purposes of sharing ideas and networking. On this, Bennet argues that the ideological relation is a weak integrator of contemporary global activism (as cited in Pickard, 2009, p.320). Instead, Bennet (as cited in Pickard, 2009) points out that the integrative function is taken over by "…personal ties, recognition of common threats, pragmatism about achieving goals, and the ease of finding associations and information through the Internet…inclusiveness has become a strong meta-ideological theme" (p.320).

From users' perspective, TED members and the public are participating in TED's activities and being integrated through the bonds of personal interests in finding information online and offline and sharing it with their communities. Despite their

political, social and economic differences or dissimilar ideological struggles, the public is continuously utilizing TED's media activism to achieve their shared goals of better education, innovation and social justice.

Due to its media activism, different communities are extolling TED for giving them a common public sphere where dialogues and exchange of knowledge among differences are conducted in a tolerant, pluralistic and democratic manner. These communities grow as a rhizomatic network in a global public sphere by replicating a decalcomania practice from one community to another whilst personalizing and customizing TED's template into their interests and goals. In the end, TED is another means to an end. These findings reconfirm Pickard's conclusion (2009) of the trends of contemporary activism as "non-hierarchical, less ideologically rigid and network-based" (p.326).

Nonetheless this proposition of ideology coherence as a weaker influential factor in an integration of a network should not impose TED as simply an innocent neutral mean that can be exploited for any kind of end. Neither should it overlook the importance of TED's ideological driven social movements and authorities in governing its rhizomatic network in the global public sphere. In point of fact, following this argument, I shall dwell to how TED's ideology drives strongly its social political characters towards manifesting the transhegemonic dynamic of serving the community as civil society and its fluid power play with state and market.

TED is contingent and rhizomatic in terms of advocating heterogeneity, diversity and plurality of innovative ideas through an open interconnected network and knowledge management of its online and offline platforms. This rhizomatic network enables TED and its global community to contingently reshape its collective identity by globalizing the local and localizing the global. Its local communities embrace TED's global identity and platform to amplify their causes whilst similarly, TED benefits from the local context, content, skills and resources for its further sustainability as global network and achieving its goal to spread ideas worldwide. Rhizomatic approach also levels down the hierarchy of decision-making to semi-hierarchical and supports the community to democratically access and participate in TED projects in which they can replicate,

modify and crowd source the production and consumption process. TED with its communities construct what Bailey et al. (2008) consider as alternative channel and content that vary, supplement or/and contradict the dominant hegemonic discourse as well as alter the representations and policies.

5.1.2 TED is Transhegemonic

TED's social political characteristics also carry certain counter hegemony attempts in challenging and transforming the common dominant practice of mass media. TED's counter-hegemonic subculture presents itself distinctively on the level of collaboration, commitment, participation and access for the public to its media compared to mainstream media. TED encourages citizen journalism and social activism as well as radically changes how media organizations work.

Through its rhizomatic network, TED reforms itself from an exclusive elitist global conference networks for industrial market to a non-profit organization touching more people from various social and political backgrounds. TED has become less vertical in its way managing its network, exercising its policy and governing its distribution of content. Similar to mainstream media, TED has uncannily strong editorial and curatorial leadership and power. Yet unlike mainstream media, TED is less rigid in innovating and evolving itself. It currently allows more participation from audience by giving them more power in editing and curating the speakers and content in the exclusive TED Global Conference and TEDx events. Thus, the ideas presented are the most mattered and significantly can address their interests, target the right people to connect and collaborate therefore improving the networking that will hopefully turned into concrete social actions and changes.

TED has become more democratic and more radical in terms of sharing their ideas and pushing the established boundaries built by the dominant political and economic elites to make an open society with equal social justice. The Anti-SOPA TED Talk from Clay Shirky shows exactly where TED stands against the state and market's effort to control the distribution and freedom to access of information. Like Shirky (2012, January) said

candidly, "Time Warner has called and they want us all back on the couch, just consuming — not producing, not sharing — and we should say, 'No'".

Nonetheless, this counter-hegemonic practice could not simply be done without TED exercising some 'compromises' and collaborating with the state and market in the ecosystem. In order to survive and cultivate, TED has become more transhegemonic in its practices as alternative media. For the sake of its sustainability in the competitive global environment of different types of imbalanced power and political systems, TED continuously reinvents its bargaining power with the state and market. It designs its business models to hybridize dynamically with the market. The TED Prize winner JR, an anarchist anti-establishment street artist may have different view and even opposite agenda than the capitalistic global companies sponsoring the TED Prize. But through TED's media vehicle, they collaborate in such fluid transhegemonic mechanism that allows the opposite parties to coexist and co-nurture in a symbiotic mutualism relationship towards achieving their highly probability of conflicting goals. In the website, such connection can be seen through the statement that JR is not officially related to the sponsors (Congratulations JR - The 2011 TED Prize Winner, n.d.). The sponsors via TED finance JR's project whilst JR can still maintain his independence as an artist. TED has tweaked its means and transformed its resources to facilitate different democratic struggles to share, unite and amplify together their best values in meeting their targets. TED has provided flexible interconnectedness.

Another illustration of similar finding is TED unabashed regular practice of presenting advertorial video from leading sponsors before TED Talk video stream begins. Advertorial video from Samsung accompanies TED Talk video of Open-sourced civilization from Marcin Jakubowski (2011, April) implicitly denounces the need to use expensive industrial products and promotes DIY sustainable cost-effective living. However in the advertorial, Samsung clearly depicts its product placement of Samsung Galaxy Notes tablets used by contemporary artists in real-life projects of reinterpreting emoticon culture and being curated by none other than the underground counter culture graffiti artist Shepard Fairey (New Hat, 2012, April 1). TED juxtaposes these videos probably more as the editorial agenda to put similar theme for the targeted audience

who love provocative, mind-altering ideas for an open society that enable them to share their art, creativity and technology into wisdom of the crowds. Yet, in parallel, TED undauntedly incorporates one of the biggest technology company to support the whole commercial commotion.

Its ease with the market also remarks the fluidity if not integration with the commercial world. TED as a non-profit alternative media has effortlessly reshaped commercialism by treating the big commercial brands as partners. Unlike radical social movement such as Greenpeace who criticizes and antagonizes completely these capitalistic institutions, TED prefers to build a constructive criticism instead, through public-private initiatives such as TED Ads Worth Spreading. Not only does TED cultivate financial support from big established companies, it also exhibits its strong branding as the leading global media organization to stand along the market's major players. This format of sponsorships is also being replicated to smaller local communities of TED and TEDx. TED's transhegemonic partnerships is what Bailey et al. (2008) point out as the strength of alternative media in confronting and subverting the ironclad structures of public and commercial media organization as well as making consensus with them through mutual collaborations.

At the same time, TED's general open political and cultural stand towards democracy and social justice confirms what Bailey et al. (2008) say about alternative media whose elusiveness and flexibility make it hard to control and keep its independence by the nation states governments. Among TED's speakers are wide-spectrums of world and local politicians and leaders from different political beliefs: from the Democrats such as Al Gore and 2007 TED Prize Winner Bill Clinton to British Conservative Party's leader David Cameron. More radical personals such as Anti-SOPA activists and the notorious Wikileaks founder Julian Assange (2010, July) are also in the list of speakers. TED is not explicitly condoning to political limits set by the state. Compared to more radical alternative media, TED occupies itself mostly as a NGO willingly collaborates with the states or criticizing its policies through non-violent dialogue and provocative talks rather than rallying street protests and more extreme social movements. TED's stance to be a global alternative media independent from nation-state borders and ideology

defines its power play with the state. Many TED's activists develop their past, present and future portfolio of political career directly or indirectly through TED. For example, TEDGlobal 2009 Fellow Mallam Nuhu Ribadu was running in 2010 Nigerian presidential election and found TED as medium to empower his political activities and projects (Tedstaff, 2010, November 22)

Thus, TED is transhegemonic because it progressively challenges the hegemonic views and power of the state and market by providing an alternative platform while consequently collaborating for its causes. TED finances its activities as non-profit civil society through non-profit channels as well as corporatization such as advertisements, sponsorships and maximizing the commercial value of its assets (especially the prestigious TED Global conference) and public-private partnerships. This marketization strategy allows TED to synergize and expand various spin-off projects from its flagship conference as well as cross subsidize its humanitarian non-profit projects worldwide. TED still adapts certain traditional values and management of mainstream media. It also reforms the editorial and brand management process into semi-hierarchical power structure that mainstream media still rigidly refuse to do. TED maintains the final authority and controls the licensing and franchising of its brand without giving its communities a veto right to its policy-making. But TED is progressing towards decentralization and democratization of its curatorship and brand usage by leveraging its online and social media platform as well as providing its media content for free to flatten the hierarchy of access and participation to its global network. Following Bailey et al.'s premises (2008), TED shows that an alternative way is still open for media organizations and more balanced power structure as well as less hierarchical access and participation are prevailing possibilities.

By being *transhegemonic* and not exclusively counter-hegemonic, TED demonstrates the contingency of alternative media in its power struggle with state, market and mainstream media. In its partnerships with the state and market, TED firmly states its independent and objective accountability against any commercial and political interests. Yet it also exhibits moderate rather than radical approach towards gaining its democratic goals. It prefers to shake the status quo from within the system rather than

being a stand-alone fighter from outside because it believes in the interdependency and co-existences for sustainable growth as a global civil society. This social action affirms Bailey et al.'s premise of realistic reason of transhegemonic approach:

> Resisting all hegemonies on all societal levels will only lead to a total detachment from the social, or a collapse into solipsism. In this sense, alternative media are transhegemonic, and not exclusively counter-hegemonic, as they oscillate between acceptance and rejection, between resistance and compliance, between restriction and creation. At the same time, they remain rhizomatic, avoiding (or at least attempting to avoid) incorporation into the realms of state and market (Bailey et al., 2008, p. 153)

TED's convergence with the market is less probable to be shared by any other more radical alternative media or civil society organizations, yet in this complex democracy and market driven system, it compels to adjust. As Bailey et.al confirm civil society should not be seen separate from the state and market and follow the Neo-Gramcian thinking, it should be engaging and overlap with both areas while being independent (2008, pp. 21-22). TED contests the hegemony of state and market that cause the political, social and economic injustice and environmental destruction, by converging itself into the system and changing things from inside.

This casualness in dealing with the powerful and hegemonic economy and political institutions can be caused by TED's unconventional historical background. It was born as part of the industry and profitable organizations to promote the players and latest innovations in the industries. Yet its civic visions have surpassed the commercial business model and turned TED to transhegemonic media activism.

Based on these key findings and discussions about how TED develops into a hybrid alternative media with all its complexity, challenges and consensus (rather than compromise) with hegemonic powers in serving the community and enhancing democracy – I come to conclusion that TED's political and cultural characteristics are contingent, rhizomatic and transhegemonic.

5.2 TED and Trends in Alternative Media

In answering the second research question of how TED can reflect the general trend of alternative media, I revisit the related research sub-questions. I have explored them mainly in the Findings Chapter and I consequently surmise them to emulate similar trends in alternative media.

First, TED's dynamic power struggle with the state, market, and mainstream media in serving the community has displayed a trend of alternative media taking part in civil society with a less radical approach and incorporating itself into the system through constructive partnerships. In order to survive in the contemporary democratic system, TED's non-profit organization management is applying corporate-like strategy. This inclination towards the market shows that alternative media's media economy is less strict against corporatization and commercialism in order to build sustainable media organization.

Second, TED's rapid growth as a global community shows that it has replicated its communal identity, cultural branding and TED-like form of idea dissemination. TED provides the public to access and participation in TED's media production (bigger role in curatorship process), consumption (free online forum and TED Talk videos) and distribution (for example, TED's media content under free Creative Common license and TED Activators program). The communities also contribute significantly in building TED's identity through TEDx events worldwide by giving local context, values and causes. However these achievements are critically compromised by the semi-hierarchical level of access and participation that exhibits TED's sole authority and veto power in the decision making process. This phenomenon could project grim general picture of alternative media's potential to be simply global social franchise chain rather than globalized open source social movement built and owned by the communities.

The third trend is regarding how TED works as civil society that promotes social change. By optimizing Castells' (2008, p.81) notion of three capacities (technological,

institutional and organizational) of globalization process in global public sphere, TED aims to expand its role as a global civil society. TED's global network represents how alternative media endeavor to mediate the political gaps, level down the hierarchy of access and participation by local communities, as well as empower the marginalized, underrepresented and underprivileged groups in a global scale. TED also projects the hard implications of the transhegemonic approach and alternative media's amalgamation with the dominant power and discourse. This approach has high possibility to deter alternative media's role as civil society, spark conflict of interests as well as undermine democracy.

Fourth, several trending challenges cultivate from TED's transhegemonic approach that can hinder TED from achieving its mission for social change without compromising its values for democracy and its role as a civil society organization. TED still maintains partially its commercial and elitist character (for example, TED Global Conference exclusive network of influential and affluent elites) for the sake of funding its non-profit projects. Other implicit commercialism and commodification are also evident in its strategic partnerships with commercial companies, influential NGOs and mainstream media. TED's autonomy and semi-hierarchical power structure as well as possible ideological bias towards the North sphere jeopardize its fight for democratic representations of diverse and plural groups and ideas. These challenges exhibit the trending threats alternative media generally face in relation to its power struggle with the state, market and mainstream media. Either being refused to be co-opted which result in radical social movement, or being cooperative and transhegemonic for the sake of financial stability and political sustainability, alternative continue to strive for their independence and alternative views.

5.3 Critical Reflection on the Study

In retrospective, some limitations occurred during the process of researching and analyzing the key findings. These limitations came in form of restricted research time and academic scope over vast amount of data. In a positive light, these limitations made me focused on more specific areas in characterizing TED as hybrid alternative media,

such as level of access and participation of its community and its relationships with the state, market and mainstream media. This research can be beneficial as the general starting point, historical background and case study for academicians to base on in instigating more explorative future research on the latest development of alternative media. I suggest for deeper and longer-term research on TED's network development to see how alternative media evolve and survive. For the public, this research can provide academic and scientific perspectives in looking at TED more critically. For TED members and management, the results and findings in this research can be used as feedbacks and reflections on how they form their global identity, improve their practices and serve the community better.

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