

The Media as Social Watch in Forest Management: Indonesia Experience

Setyawati D* and Shaw R

Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies, Kyoto University, Yoshida-Honmachi, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto, 606-8501, Japan

Abstract

In the past decades, climate change and global warming issues have been recurring in the media and public sphere. Despite the continuous calling to stop environmental destruction, deforestation continues at an alarming rate. More than a medium to transmit information, the media can play important role to influence decision making of government and other stakeholders forest management. This paper studied the case in Indonesia where the media industry is thriving and deforestation is growing. Discourse analysis on 150 forestry related articles from three online media found that there is a difference in the focus of national and local media. The national media coverage tends to discuss the problems of an issue while the local media provides solutions to those issues. To overcome this mismatch, the local and social media can create trends that would be resonated by national media. Then, the role of media as 'social watch' can be effective. In fulfilling such role, this paper proposes a framework of action plans in which the media can act as social watch. Within this framework, the action plans include the role of media in agenda setting, capacity building, bridging, monitoring assessment and reporting and documenting.

Keywords: Media; Social Watch; Communities

Introduction

Saving the environment has been the common media discourse of this decade. Scholars, movie stars and world leaders are calling out to stop environmental destruction through popular media. Al Gore made more famous for his documentary 'An Inconvenient Truth' on global warming and its effects. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) appointed actresses, models and athletes to attract attention to their environmental campaigns. Sundance film festivals have become an important platform for environmental movies. The media coverage on environmental changes is also expanding. Traditional media and new media such as social media alike are campaigning for environmental action.

Environmental communication has also become important discourse in the public and private sphere. Environmental communication has influenced the government's policy-making. For instance, environmental activist joined with the public in the UK has triggered opposition voices on the privatization proposals to the management of the forest [1]. The online campaign set up a petition that achieved 533,053 signatures. In addition, recognizing the importance of communicating environmental problems, Universities around the globe are launching environmental communication as a formal education degree.

Despite the popular notion of saving the environment, deforestation continues at alarming rate of 0.11% per year, between the year 2000 to 2011 [2]. The government and private sector claim that in their forest mining activities, they are focusing on forest health, productivity and socio-economic functions of forest, as well as forest certification [3,4]. In reality, the current management of forest is being criticized by Maser who argues that forest functions is being altered without ideas of how these actions will affect the sustainability of the forest [5]. Anthropogenic factors such as forest based industries, population growth and agriculture continue to threaten the forest [6]. In addition, natural disaster and climate change also influence changes in forest ecosystem and composition.

To overcome this situation, the media has the potential to play a significant educating role. Formal education can only reached out to

certain population and neglect the larger sphere where perpetrators of forest degradation reside. The media as a communication actor can provide informal education as well as monitor on-the-ground actions of forest communities. This paper proposes such role of the media as social watch in forest management. Functioning more as a monitoring and documenting actor, the media can take the responsibility of empowering and capacity building of the community. This informal learning by the media can create domino effects which started from individual level to the government.

This paper proposes the role of media as social watch by looking into the case of Indonesia. The purpose of this paper is twofold. First is to articulate the Indonesian media coverage on forest issues. Second is to provide a framework in which the media can play a role to improve the situation on forest management. To achieve its purposes, this paper reviews media literature. Then, this paper discusses brief history and progress of media industry in Indonesia. Indonesia is selected because the existing media industry reflects hegemonic power of media as discussed by Bainbridge [7]. There are a few media networks owned by political elites that dominate communication channels in the country. These communication channels are being consumed by 240 million population whose 21 percent watch television regularly [8]. Subsequently, media coverage on forest issues in Indonesia is analyzed by discourse analysis to see the classification of coverage; whether the article highlights problems or proposes solutions to certain issue. Next, the paper designed a framework of actions with action plans where the media can be used to improve efforts for sustainable forest management. Sustainable forest management is defined as sound efforts that provide

***Corresponding author:** Setyawati D, Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies, Kyoto University, Yoshida-Honmachi, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto, 606-8501, Japan, Tel: 81-75-753-7531; E-mail: s.dinita@gmail.com

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balance to the forest ecosystem's productivity, resilience, biodiversity and integrity [9]. Last, conclusion is discussed.

The Role and Influence Factor of Media

The media, be it traditional media such as newspaper, mass media such as television, social media such as internet social network and informal such as university bulletin board as a common influence factors. These are; 1) creating a perception of reality; 2) influencing the activities of audiences, advertisers as well as their own internal organizational process and demand for engagement Cinzia, and Kranenburg; and 3) setting the political agenda McCombs [10-14]. With almost one third of the world's population is using the Internet today, the number of social media user is increasing gradually [15]. And today, the more educated audience has more power to choose the media, which fit for his or her needs. The mass media might be able to influence larger audiences, but if it needs to tailor its communication form in order to persuade a specific group.

Media is defined as "all those institutions of society that make use of copying technologies to disseminate communication" [16]. Bainbridge stated that media is anything in which something else can be transmitted [7]. McLuhan coined the term 'the medium is the message' meaning that the form of a message (print, audio visual) determines the way in which that message will be perceived [10]. McLuhan theory suggests that audio-visual device such as television can create a perception of reality for its viewers. This view is further endorsed by Gerbner who hypothesized communication of culture (through media) is not merely to entertain, but also to create publics; they do not only reflect but also shape attitude, tastes and preferences [11].

This is to say that the media is used as a tool that influences activities of society and demand for an engagement. As proposed by Keefer and Khemani, media access can be the source of information and persuasion for individuals directly through their own exposure and indirectly through other institutions [12]. Continuous exposure of media creates behavior change and brought impact in various dimensions of the society. Scholars have researched the impact of media on politics, disaster management and post disaster recovery and public service [12,17-21]. This power aspect of the media brought what Bainbridge describe as 'hegemonic power' where the elite dominant group uses the media to persuade subordinate groups to accept the leadership and ideas [7]. The dynamics of media also relates to different dimensions of social, economic and politics [22].

The media itself can be differentiated by its ownership, scope of target audience, coverage and mode of communication. Private owned media refers to broadcasting industry that owns a national and local network of television, radio, online and targeting large number of audience. Community based media is the media where the audience is main agent of its operation, for example local television and community radio. Private owned media has a larger scope of audience and coverage than community based media. Both private and community based media exist in different forms; radio, television, new media or social media and informal media.

The early-developed media such as radio and television helped to construct hegemony by producing the cultural identity for people; or the way people should behave [7]. Television is portrayed as the media that offer both recreational and educational functions, a tool useful for classifying and acclimatizing the audience to the outside world and important way to conserve the tradition of media and ways of being [7]. Social media platform has risen for sharing various types of user

personalized content to generate relationships and social capital [23]. Khang also argues "with the rise of varied platforms of social media, the online environment has become fully interactive and collaborative, allowing individuals to actively engage in two-way communication, post reviews of services and products, upload self-created videos, and even engage in virtual lives". The news spread through the internet has named as a game changer in what was a fairly tame, safe media instrument [7]. In addition, informal media for example bulletin board is used in a smaller scope of audience. Nevertheless all the media above have certain degree of influence to its audiences.

Media and Forest Issue in Indonesia

Forest issues and media coverage

Indonesia has lost 8 percent of its total area to deforestation between early 2000 and 2012, making it the highest level of tree cover lost in Southeast Asia. In 2011, there are 130.68 million hectares of forest in Indonesia, including marine conservation areas. The royalties and other revenues from forest operations exceeded \$1.1 billion per annum and forest related employment amounted to about 800,000 jobs in the formal sector [24]. The 1945 Constitution mandate was that the forest and all its contents is to be utilized to the maximum benefit of the people while maintaining sustainability. In response to the climate change impact, the Government has also targeting a 26 per cent emission reduction by 2020, with 14 per cent reduction coming from the forestry sector. Indonesia is also one of the target countries for REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation), a climate change mitigation approach from various sectors.

Although the country is active in leading the efforts to engage multi-stakeholders to improve the research and investments into sustainable landscapes, but it faces challenges in implementing sustainable forest management (SFM) at below the national level. This is partly due to decentralization that has been taking place since early 2000 and complicates policy integration in forest management. The decentralization policy in the forestry sector was aimed at handing over roles and authority for forest resource management from central to local government. However, its implementation in Indonesia is mired with complexity and conflict due to differences in understanding of the forest management model in the field [25]. The main regulations in forestry sector are Law No. 19/2004 that regulates the licensing for private companies and Law No. 18/2013 that sanctions the measurement against forest destructors. In addition, each province and district has its own regulations that do not necessarily follow the national law.

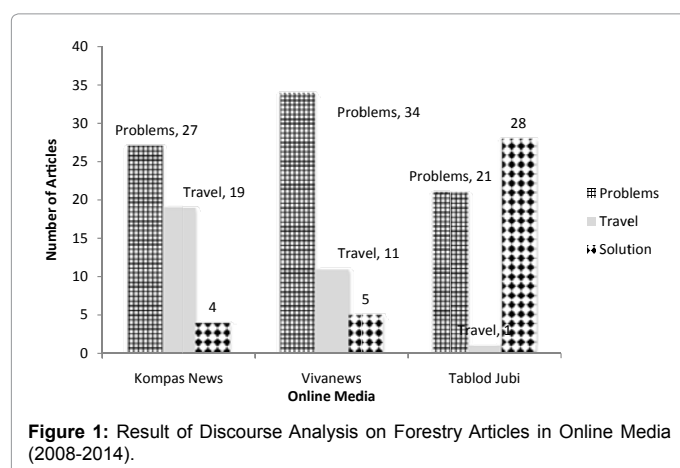
Despite the fact that these existing law and regulations recognize the role of community in forest management, however the local ownership of forest is fairly weak because of government and private sector domination. For example the community-based involvement of *Pembinaan Masyarakat Desa Hutan* (PMDH) was mired with many shortcomings and failure, resulting community based forestry area only accounted to about 2% of total production areas, while private companies manage 97.5% of total production forest. The involvement of local community in forest management is vital given that the people are dependent upon the forest for their livelihoods. Pulhin states that people who live close to forests and may be dependent on them for a variety of products and services have greater interest in the proper management than distant authorities located hundreds of kilometers away [26]. Although forest management is being regularized at the national and local level, it has not reached the grass root level. The problems surrounding Indonesia forest management and high rate

of deforestation demonstrate that forest in Indonesia has yet to be managed in a sustainable way.

With complexity framing forest management in Indonesia, the media exacerbated the issue by focusing on the problems rather than solutions to forestry issues. Discourse analysis was conducted on 150 articles (2008-2014, time varied within the three media) from three online news; Kompas, Vivanews and Tabloid Jubi, owned by different companies. Discourse analysis stemmed from a social constructionist view that pinpoint language at the centre of social construction process [27]. Discourse analysis examines the use of language to create meaning, images, stories or statements within particular social context. The analysis classified newspaper articles on forest into 3 common discourses: problems, travel and solution. The categorization of 'problems' is defined when the news is focusing on the issues related to the forest, ranging from legal uncertainty, forest burning or corruption case. Articles classified as 'travel' articles is classified in the human-interest section and focused on the tourism aspects of forest. Lastly, articles classified as 'solution' define an answer to a problem.

Result of the analysis shows different discourse on national and local news. On the national news, the articles covering forestry are mainly focusing on the problems related to forestry and less on the solutions to the issues (Figure 1). These articles also have coverage on tourism aspect of the forest. From 50 articles analysed on Kompas newspaper, 27 are focusing on the problems in forestry management, including legal issue, forest destruction due to human made disaster, corruption and how mismanagement of forest is causing poverty. Nineteen articles portray the forest as travelling site and four articles propose solutions to forestry problems. Solutions that these articles propose include the use of indigenous knowledge in forest management and corporate social responsibility programme in saving species of the forest.

Similarly, Viva news focused on the problems of the forestry issue. Discourse analysis on Vivanews articles show that 34 articles are focusing on the problems, 11 articles are illustrating the forest as tourism site and five articles emphasized on efforts to conserve the forest through efficient use of technology, planting of useful forest species, conservation actions initiated by blogger community and how the government is using aid fund to protect the forest. These articles published on both online sites are also being broadcasted on social media. Some of these articles is forwarded by active social media users and become 'trending topic', or popular issue that triggers online discussion.



On the other hand, the local media Tabloid Jubi concerns more on the solutions to the forest management rather than the problems. Discourse analysis from 50 news articles shows that the articles are discussing about ways to save the forest or protect the people through forest conservation, legal framework revision or local government efforts for forest concession moratorium. These articles are also lengthier and use descriptive rather than aggressive words. For example, headline of an article says 'Merauke citizen is reminded over cutting down trees near the coastal area'. In comparison, the headlines on national news use words such as 'threatened' or 'feudalism'. This is to say that the sense of responsibility of local media is higher than national media to certain issue and thus, proves the importance of involving these local media in efforts for the environment.

Role of Media as Social Watch in Forest Management

This section provides assessment of the role and influence of media in forest management. This paper proposes the media can act as 'social watch' in forest management. The term social watch is generally associated with monitoring of justice within the aspects of gender and poverty. The word 'social' in Merriam dictionary is defined as "the interaction of the individual and the group, or the welfare of human beings as members of society" [28]. Kuhn defines studies of social as "the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques shared by members of given community" [29]. From those definitions, here social watch is defined as the role of media in mentoring the society that includes monitoring, guiding, as well as capacity building.

Functioning of media as social watch using the study case in Indonesia involves a number of interrelated internal and external factors. The analysis in the previous section provides media context in Indonesia where the press enjoys significant freedom, private owned media has strong networks and community based media continues to thrive. This condition paired with a number of forest management problems, including decentralization, competing framework of regulations and laws, lack of local ownership to the forest and corruption prone system of conservation and reforestation signify the specific engagement of media as social watch. First, it is vital to consider the push and factor of the media that involve both private and community based media. Second, the media can increase engagement in capacity building of the community with support from government at national and local levels. Last, the media can provide bridging between private sector, government and the community.

The push and pull factor of media

As proven by the discourse analysis, there is a mismatch on the focus of news coverage between national and local media. To overcome this mismatch, this paper proposes a strategy of the 'push and pull factor'. The push and pull factor is defined as incentive to set the national media agenda towards environmental sustainability. Although commercial media still has hegemonic power in influencing its audience, but the growth of Internet has changed the dynamics in a sense that the media is also picking up what is trending in the society. Indonesia is ranked 13th in terms of global internet population, with more than 42 million internet users [30]. Social media has become important campaigning tools for national and local elections. As Rosen suggested, the media hegemony (or monopoly) as gatekeeper of the news is threatened by not just new technology and competitors, but potentially by the audience it serves [31]. Commercial media broadcast the news based on trends on the internet. As such, community based media, including local newspaper, television and social media can act as the push factor that sparks sustainable forest management trends. In

correspondence, private media can act as the pull factor that pressure stakeholders of SFM to act.

The previous discussion presented that community based media is the media where community or individuals are the main operating agent, such as community radio, social media or local television. Although social media is associated with large social capital and may have the traits of private owned media, but this paper takes the view that it is a community driven media. The reason being is that trending topics in social media originate from individual users and personalization of social media depends much on the user. If popular social media personality can be influenced to discuss the solutions to forest management, then it will derive a bottom up trend. In Indonesia where social media is popular, information can be spread quickly and reach a large number of audience.

With decentralization, it is imperative to influence decision making of the local government through the local media. The programme of local television and community radio can be tailored to fit the local audience's need and educate them in forestry issues. Examining the role of community radio in post disaster management, Hibino and Shaw demonstrated that its role is vital since existing mass media has not been able to respond to the needs of communities at the local level [19]. Hence this type of media can be the main agent and important tool for ensuring the sustainability in forest management.

Correspondingly the private media can stimulate pressure to the government on the issue of forest management. Here private media refers to large media network encompasses national and local television, pay per view television, radio stations, newspaper and online news channels. The downward arrow expressed how the private media can stimulate policy improvement especially since the media owner in Indonesia is influential. The strong domino effect of media would incite forest management discussion at the policy level. Given that the media is not a neutral device, deliberately used to influence the government's decision making (Stromberg, 2005:189), it can be influential in exerting social pressure to the government.

The media in capacity building

There is little understanding of cause and effects related to environmental degradation, socio-economic impacts and environmentally-induced migration [32]. Although both Indonesian national government has provided guidelines on forest management, conduct seminars and workshop on regularly basis, but the understanding of forest management at local level is limited. Study from CIFOR on forestry sector decentralization in South Sulawesi shows that the main challenge is local level understanding of forest management [25]. The current understanding of forest management is not sufficient to provide tangible action both at the community and policy level. This situation creates an opportunity to be filled by the media to act as capacity building for the community. Goldstein may suggest that the prestige press in particular has contributed to the poor understanding of particular environmental issue [33]. However, community based media with its operation supervised by volunteered or paid environmental professionals can ensure the data and facts on environmental issues are accurate.

In the present situation where the audience is getting too much information, the 'balance' role of media is important. Balance means that the media provide unbiased information on certain issue. There is some truth to the argument of Goldstein that says the present society is no longer seem to care very much about making a discretion [33].

However, the present society is better equipped with information and thus, capable of retrieve information on certain issue from various sources, for example through online or traditional media. What matters more are how to keep the audience interested. To educate the audience and to make the message absorbed, the media can utilize innovative ways in its programming. For example information on harvesting guidelines, dangers of illegal logging and indigenous forest management can be packaged into an lively documentary or live broadcast that would influence the behavior change of community towards sustainability. The media can provide educational information as well as collecting feedback from the community on the most suitable ways of managing the forest.

More than data and facts on environmental issue, receiving feedback from the audience, information sharing and dissemination of knowledge among community and individuals are equally important. The reason being is that environmental discourse in the media has been mainly focused on the event and damage rather than the solutions. Allan argues that there is a tendency from the media to represent environmental issue as specific event-oriented disaster rather than recognizing it as event in need of bureaucratic calculation and discussion [34]. Critics against the media said that the environmental discourse on the media tend to emphasis on the perpetrator and the problems without focusing on the solutions [35]. Discourse analysis from national media articles has also proved this argument. If the community and individuals provide feedback on what information is needed, this lack of information can be avoided.

Important note is also to provide more than brief news to the audience, but creating programming that has significant impact and initiate behavior change both from below and above. Grafstorm and Windel argue that the media coverage is limited to discussing an issue on the surface without offering reflective and in-depth discussion about the broader context. This phenomenon could be explained by the assumption that media is limited in their capacity to provide neutral coverage due to the interest value of the news. For them, 'bad news' is 'good news'. The challenge is to alter this perspective into 'environmental awareness' is 'good news'.

The media as bridge

Focusing the discussion on forest management in the case of Indonesia, the issue mainly lies on the decentralization that create complexity in information sharing between national and local levels. Differing views exist between the national and local government. The national government transferred the authority of forest management to the local government, who then extract the forest resources to gain more local income. In the midst of this debate, media can play bridging roles between individuals and government, private sectors and international organisations to encourage communications within all stakeholders, with the purpose of identifying problems and finding common solutions. The realization of SFM requires intentional measures from all direct and indirect stakeholders, although their degree of involvement might differ. This is where the role of media is vital in convincing those actors to maintain the sustainability of the forest.

The view taken is that the media could become an additional agent of linking and monitoring sustainable development. Decentralization that took place in Indonesia since early 2000 has fractioned the national and local government, creating complexity in legal framework for sustainable forest management. Identification of media is part of reconnecting process. In practice, although the media has been

successful in influencing daily lives of an audience, for example political views of the public or alternative ways to work due to heavy traffic on live broadcast, it has less success in contributing to the behavior change of community towards the forest and environment. First, the perspective of media on environmental issue needs to be changed, from an agent of news to an educator. Once the media perceive itself as an educator, then it can be effective in creating a bond among stakeholders of forest management.

Other roles of media

The hegemonic power of media allows it to set the agenda of the public. Along with agenda setting, the function of media in monitoring, assessment and reporting, as well documenting is also vital given the need for assessments in environmental issue taken from perspective

other than the government's. Here the media can provide alternative ways to manage the forest, for example encouraging community ownership of the forest will ensure better forest management. The media can also maintain historical records of forest ownership and management, which then maintain common identity among forest stakeholders. These actions plans of the media are summarized in Figure 2. Figure 2 proposes framework of action plans in which the media can a role as social watch of forest management. These indicators are derived from the role and influence factor of media. This paper set 5 actions for media: agenda setting, capacity building, bridging, monitoring assessment and reporting, as well as documenting. To maximize the effort, private media and community based media need to work closely together and have the common understanding of the issue on focus.

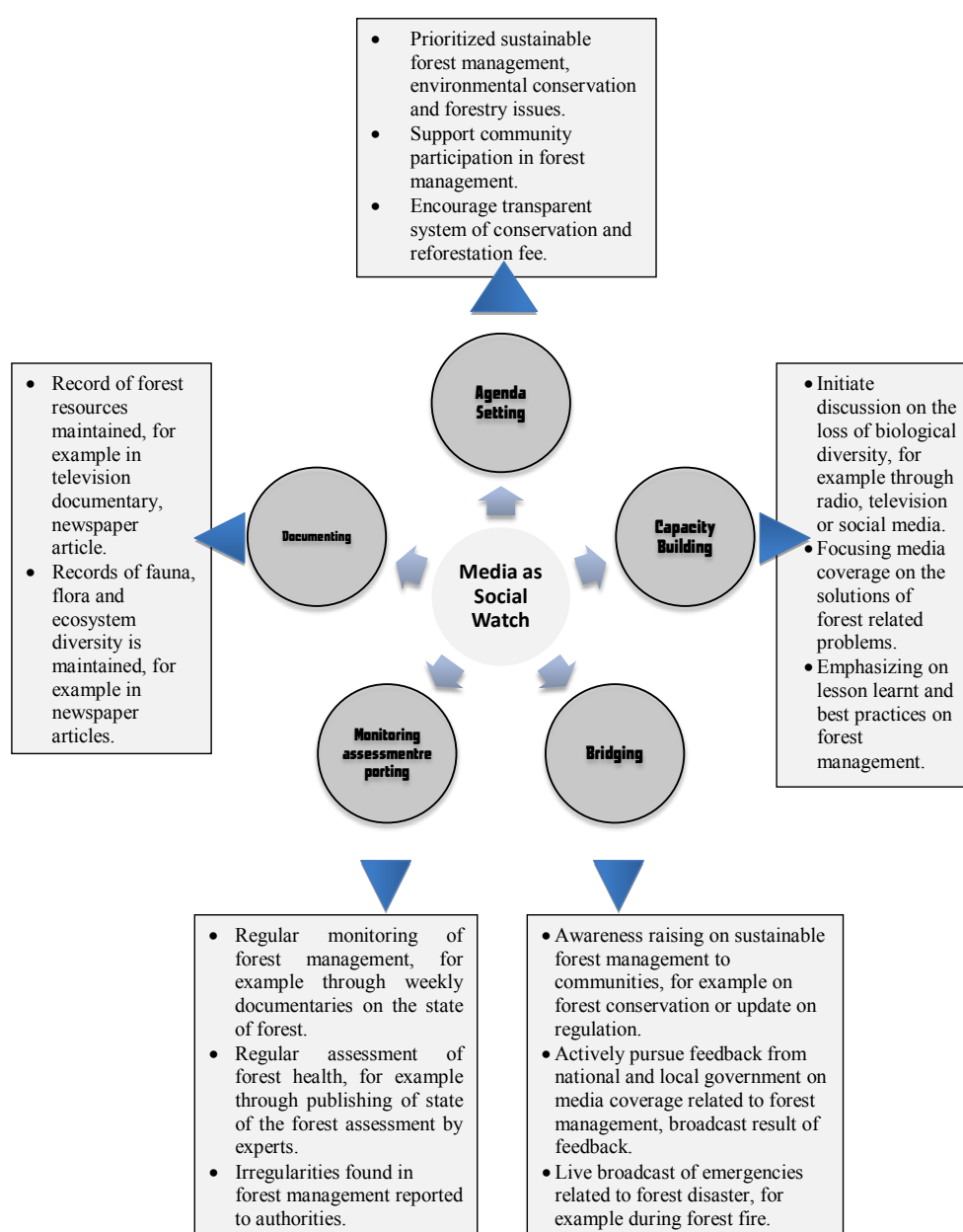


Figure 2: Framework of Action Plans for Media as Social Watch in Forest Management.

Conclusion

In the past decades, climate change and global warming issues have received more coverage in mass media and the public sphere. The form of coverage varied from news reporting or documentaries. However, the coverage on news are mostly focused on the sensational factor of a particular environmental issue. Even though media coverage has been focused on environmental problems, one of them being deforestation, that provide obstacle to future sustainable development of society, yet not all people are educated to act against it. Despite the media is being considered as the main actor in environmental communication, it has yet to play constructive role in the society.

This paper categorized the media into two types, that is private media and community based media. Private media is the one that owned by media network. Community based media including community radio, local television and social media. Given the media is commonly owned by corporation giant, it needs a strong incentive to promote forest management that is sustainable. Commercial media may have difficulties in terms of setting the goals, which is right for the public (not for the owner). However involving community based media such as community radio, local television and social media, can overcome these difficulties. Community based media is able to create a trend that can be resonated by the private media.

Media that exists on the public space and sphere is a prominent tool to influence decision-making. The media is where all stakeholders can gather and exchange information. Agenda setting and hegemonic power of the media can influence government's decision-making and policies to foster sustainable forest management. A joint effort between mass media and community based media is vital to obtain roots in both government and community, build bonds among all stakeholders and maintain a common identity. Discourse analysis of forestry articles in Indonesian media shows that the coverage on national media is focusing on the problems of forest management, while the local media is focusing on the solutions to forest management. This demonstrates the sense of responsibility of national and local media differs. Thus, engagement of local media in encouraging sustainable forest management is vital.

The effectiveness of the media as social watch is refined into several factors and action plans, including the push and pull factors, the media as capacity builder, the media as the bridge between existing sustainable forest management stakeholders exist on the national and local level, how the media set the agenda for sustainable forest management, the media in monitoring, assessment and reporting and lastly, how it document forest histories. The push and pull factors relate to how private and community based media work together to create strong incentive for coverage of sustainable forest management. The media is an effective educator since the public consumes media on a daily basis. Moreover, the media can transmit and act as site for information sharing between national and local level stakeholders in forest management.

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