

## The rhizome perspective: a case study on community radio in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

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**Abstract** The condition of community radio is always linked to its ability as a medium to provide diversity of information amid a homogeneous media industry dominated by conglomerates. On the other hand, they are very likely to experience powerlessness, mainly due to the narrow dichotomy formalised by regulations. This study focused on four radio stations in Yogyakarta: Saka FM, BBM FM, Swaka FM, and Angkringan FM. This study examined the dynamics of community radio in managing community issues and how it can remain relevant to its communities. This qualitative research used a collective case study method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with four community radio managers, broadcasters and experts, as well as direct observation at each radio station. The rhizome perspective was used to analyse the findings. The study concluded that community radio stations have stagnated in capturing the reality of their communities, especially socio-political issues. Secondly, the relevance of community radio stations to their communities is not based on their ability to address community issues, but rather on their role as entertainment media. These results indicate that it is difficult for radio stations to function as rhizomes as catalysts and to build interconnections.

**Keywords:** community; interconnection; radio; rhizome

### INTRODUCTION

The media situation, in general, is coloured by the presence of technology (Chaparro-Domínguez et al., 2025; Newman, 2026). However, the media landscape in Indonesia can also be described in two ways: business and content. From a business perspective, it is characterised by conglomeration, resulting in a homogeneous ownership configuration centred on certain media groups (Masduki & D'Haenens, 2022; Nugroho et al., 2013; Syarif, 2025; Zuhri et al., 2023). For example, Global Media Com (MNC, Global TV, RCTI, iNews), CT Corp (Trans TV, CNN Indonesia, CNBC Indonesia, Detik), Media Group (Metro TV, Media Indonesia, Metrotvnews) and others. Meanwhile, from a content perspective, there are signs of Jakarta-centrism. This term refers to the tendency for media content to focus solely on events in Jakarta and other major cities, such as Surabaya and Bandung (A. Adam, 2018; Masroni, 2023).

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This situation risks the disappearance of specific regional and community issues from the national media. The disappearance can be anticipated through a network broadcasting mechanism by establishing network stations and local stations (Armando, 2014; *Undang-Undang RI Nomor 32 Tahun 2002 Tentang Penyiaran*, 2002) and by digitalising television broadcasting (Rahayu et al., 2025). However, this has not affected content diversity because local media are affiliated with national media owners, and the industry environment is unfavourable (Rahayu et al., 2025; Setiawan, 2024). Another reason is that regional and community issues are considered less interesting and generate little advertising revenue.

Seeing this reality, local, minority, and 'less national' issues are at risk of not getting a place in national media (Birowo, 2004; Haryono et al., 2024). Efforts to address regional and community problems are reflected in Law No. 32 of 2002 concerning Broadcasting. The law regulates the existence of community media by referring to them as Community Broadcasting Institutions (*Lembaga Penyiaran Komunitas* or *LPK*). Community Broadcasting Institutions are media that aim to educate and advance society in achieving prosperity by implementing various programs that include culture, education, and information that depict the nation's identity (*Undang-Undang RI Nomor 32 Tahun 2002 Tentang Penyiaran*, 2002).

Community broadcast media also carries out the mandate of the law as non-commercial media established by specific communities and is independent (*Undang-Undang RI Nomor 32 Tahun 2002 Tentang Penyiaran*, 2002). No media in Indonesia has a particular character like that of Community Broadcasting Institutions (CBI). The presence of CBI is essential because the diversity of information and media content is a form of media service to the public, especially the community (C. Adam, 2022; Amadu, 2025; Carpentier et al., 2003a; Putra & Damayanti, 2021). The public served is based not only on number and location (for example, popular locations such as the national capital) but also on the extent to which the media can provide a representative perspective and space for various community interests and social and political realities of local politics (Adebayo et al., 2022; Howley, 2007; Sjachro et al., 2024). A media content perspective that relies on the interests and needs of a particular community is critical because it is through this media that community empowerment can be developed through a more egalitarian approach grounded in that community's unique interests.

Not only that, but the presence of CBI can also serve as a counterweight to media conglomerates, as they are required to support themselves to continue operating and present a broader range of issues (Masduki & D'Haenens, 2022). However, the limited funding and the lack of discourse about community media in Indonesia may mean this media is not sufficiently capable of emerging as a new force.

Community media and radio are at a crossroads with such realities. On one hand, it is a medium of resistance to the domination of national or mainstream media. On the other hand, community media is very likely to experience powerlessness due to regulations, limited reach, minimal community participation, and limited operational funds (M & Urrahmah, 2025; Moffat et al., 2025; Mpehongwa, 2024).

This intersectional perspective on community media is also evident in research conducted in Indonesia on a range of topics. For example, some studies focus more on community radio from an alternative radio perspective (Fudholi & Eddyono, 2025; Mubaroq & Qur'aini, 2023; Sitepu et al., 2024) or its development amidst technological dynamics (Ashrianto et al., 2024; M & Urrahmah, 2025). Community radio in Indonesia is also frequently studied in relation to regulation (Budiman, 2014; Eddyono & Hanathasia, 2018; Sjachro, 2017; Wahyuningsih, 2014; Widyaningrum & Setiawan, 2017; Yudaningsgar, 2019) and participation (Birowo, 2010; Gustavito & Nasdian, 2021; Sjachro et al., 2021).

Given existing research gaps, the researchers objective is to break out of this pattern by using a rhizome perspective as an analytical tool. By adopting it, community media is no longer viewed through a commercial or alternative polarisation lens. Instead, it builds a new perspective that places community radio at the centre and complements other entities.

The rhizome approach, based on rhizomatic and arborescent thinking initiated by Deleuze, stems from integrating various approaches in viewing community media. Arborescent is a linear, hierarchical, and sedentary structure that can be represented as a genealogical tree, with branches that continue to divide into smaller categories (Santana & Carpentier, 2010). Meanwhile, rhizomatic is closely related to alternatives because it is nonlinear, anarchic, and nomadic. According to Deleuze, rhizomes differ from trees or roots because they connect from

one point to another (Santana & Carpentier, 2010). Thus, this approach is also integrated with the issues of CBI described above.

Based on the problem, this research focuses on the situation of four community radio stations. The Special Region of Yogyakarta was selected because it is a province with a large number of community radio stations in Indonesia. Data shows that as of 2008, there were 38 community radio stations in operation (Kompas Cyber Media, 2009).

Based on this background, we developed two research questions. First, what are the dynamics of community radio in managing community issues in Yogyakarta? Second, how can community radio remain relevant to its community?

## METHODOLOGY

The above problem statement was addressed through a descriptive case study that aimed to detail a phenomenon (Yin, 2003). A collective case study was chosen because the researcher felt it was necessary to explore several community radio stations in Yogyakarta to provide a more detailed and comprehensive picture of the dynamics of community radio in managing community issues and the approaches they take to remain relevant to their communities.

In this research, the researchers interviewed four resource persons from community radio stations in Yogyakarta, selected based on the year of establishment and the content broadcast. This variation was used to capture the complex and distinct dynamics between four radio stations. These resource persons were selected based on several criteria: they had previously or still managed community radio and were directly involved in program design.

Researchers also interviewed the NGO Combine Research Institution (CRI), an expert on social issues, including community media. Data from experts is used to view the community radio situation at a macro level, to connect the dynamics and micro realities across different radio stations. Table 1 below shows the detailed data.

**Table 1.** Details of sources and radio station

No	Name	Position	Radio institution	Explanation
1	Source 1	Senior broadcaster and manager	BBM FM	The Minomartani Cultural Centre (Sleman Regency) supports BBM FM. This radio station has been broadcasting since 1995 under the name Radio Suket Teki. To date, the radio station has been operating on a specific frequency.
2	Source 2	Manager & broadcaster	Swaka FM	Content focus: culture Founded and managed by the Gilangharjo Pandak community in Bantul Regency, the station operates on 107.7 FM. They obtained their broadcasting license in 2019 and are still operating today.
3	Source 3	Station manager & broadcaster	Saka FM	Content focus: culture Saka FM is located at the Great Mosque of Kauman and broadcast from 2012 to 2024 on frequency 107.9. A board of directors manages the radio station under the auspices of the Great Mosque of Kauman.
4	Source 4	Founder & broadcaster	Angkringan FM	Content focus: Islamic religion Founded by residents of Timbulharjo Village, Bantul Regency, from 2000 to 2006. Before becoming a radio, it initially took the form of a local information bulletin.
5	Source 5	Expert	Combine Research Institution	Content focus: Entertainment and local information NGOs that have been concerned with community issues since 2001 to the present

Source: Author (2025)

Apart from conducting qualitative interviews, the researchers also conducted direct qualitative observations on the community radio under study. This strategy aims to develop the interview results and capture the real situations each radio station faces. Direct qualitative observation was conducted by visiting the radio broadcast production both inside and outside

the studio (live and taping programs). The observation was mainly conducted on radio stations that are still operating today, namely Swaka FM, BBM FM and Saka FM (still operating when the observation was conducted). Not only that, but the researchers also observed their website and social media platform to understand how they try to connect with the audience and what is relevant to them.

The various data sources used also enhanced the research's validity. Furthermore, validity was achieved through the research process by connecting the findings from one community radio station with those from other community radio stations, including the involvement of experts as sources (outside the four community radio stations).

After all interviews and observations were completed, the researcher conducted a thorough reflection on the field findings. Furthermore, data analysis involves collecting open data based on asking general questions and developing analytical results from information submitted by participants (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 200).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The following discussion answers two questions: the dynamics of community radio in managing community issues and how it can remain relevant to its communities. In addition, the researcher will also analyse several findings using a rhizome perspective

### **The dynamics of community radio in managing community issues**

Each region in Yogyakarta has distinct community characteristics and the issues that accompany them. The community issues referred to here originate from local communities exposed to community radio emissions. The research findings show that some community radios have experienced stagnation in capturing community realities. Even though it was initially founded with community support, once it received permission and went on the air, it was no longer a reference. The idealism of community media, which carries community issues, is no longer the basis for managing event programs.

Furthermore, research demonstrates that the availability of technology is not always the key to community radio growth. The community's interconnectedness is more crucial. From Rhizome's perspective, community media's inability to address societal issues further disconnects them from local communities. This condition poses a significant problem, even more than technological or regulatory issues.

The rhizome approach sees community media as a medium for 'connecting one dot to another'. According to Deleuze, community media is imagined as a fluid civil society network connected to civil society organisations and other social movements (non-media) through this approach (Carpentier, 2016). In brief, the rhizome approach highlights fluidity in society and media (de Regt, 2024; Santana & Carpentier, 2010).

Therefore, there are at least three aspects that can be used to look at community media through this rhizome approach, namely the role of community media as a crossroads for civil society, the nature of community media, which is difficult to understand, and its interconnection, and connectedness with the market and the state (Carpentier, 2007; Santana & Carpentier, 2010).

Meanwhile, technological innovations, including the use of social media, can expand broadcast reach but do not always make them more connected to their communities. This condition is because they are not involved in trans-local networks, either in terms of organisational structure or broadcast content.

According to Deleuze, the role of community media also lies in serving as a crossroads for civil society, its relationship with the state, and the market. Community media is not just an actor in a rhizome network but also a catalyst, acting as a meeting point for various organisations and movements. Media is a place and space where people from diverse organisations, social movements, and struggles can meet and collaborate (Carpentier, 2007, 2016).

The findings above are evident in in-depth interviews conducted by researchers with Swaka FM and Saka FM, who have different vision bases, technology adoption, and management approaches. Saka FM is a community radio station with the tagline "media friendship" (in Indonesian: media *silaturahmi*). The radio was initially managed by the Kauman people of Yogyakarta City (one of the cities in the Special Region of Yogyakarta). Program guidelines and content are limited to this radio's vision, which carries Islamic messages.

According to source 3, at the outset of its establishment, Islamic content was broadcast openly and clearly. However, to expand the audience segment and make it easier to spread messages or information via social media, the management agreed to convey the Islamic message more softly. The proportion of Saka FM's broadcasts is dominated by entertainment and music, while the remainder comprises information and education. The talk show program is one of the most widely produced because Saka FM wants to reach out to more communities.

The shift in Saka FM's content shows they are gradually distancing themselves from civil society, specifically the surrounding community. Entertainment and music content can be produced independently by individuals. At this point, Saka FM is unable to act as a catalyst for civil society movements, whether in the political, social or cultural spheres. The technology adopted by Saka FM is seen only as a tool for disseminating content, rather than as a space for bringing together the ideas, aspirations and struggles of the local community. Thus, the relevance and interconnection between Saka FM and the community are increasingly lost.

A different condition happened to Swaka FM, which aired from Kauman Gilangharjo, Pandak, Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta. When it first aired in 2019, Swaka was an acronym for Swara Kauman (meaning 'voice' in Indonesian). Kauman refers to the location where this radio studio is broadcast. Over time, the acronym Swaka was changed to Swara Budaya (which means 'culture voice'). With the broader connotation of this acronym, they hope to focus more on elevating and communicating community culture. The educational function of culture is also part of their idealism.

Swaka FM was born out of its founder's concerns. Source 2 said that the world, including Indonesia, was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to him, at that moment, all the residents of Kauman felt suffering. This condition is made worse by the lack of entertainment. The only entertainment channel, namely television, is thought to worsen their psychological condition because it always reports on the COVID-19 virus. With cultural entertainment content such as ketoprak, macapat (art from Java), live karaoke, and occasional talk shows with local district offices, Swaka FM exists today.

Source 2 stated that the idea for an event program was not based solely on the community's needs but also on the broadcaster's interests. According to source 2, the difficulty of recruiting broadcasters means they are not too strict in using the criteria for who can broadcast on Swaka FM. As long as the broadcaster's broadcast interests are not far from cultural themes, they can broadcast on this radio.

The condition of Swaka FM shows that interconnection is crucial to the survival of community radio. Although Swaka FM's technology is not as sophisticated as Saka's, Swaka shows that interconnection with the community can keep it relevant. The presence of Swaka FM is a breakthrough in the rigidity of organisations and the public media market (Carpentier, 2007, 2016). The organisation of community radio, which is far from standardised, makes Swaka FM accessible to anyone. This fact is beyond the reach of non-community media.

Angkringan FM experienced a different situation. Angkringan FM has been operating since 2000, beginning with the Angkringan bulletin. In Javanese, 'angkring' means sitting relaxed. Meanwhile, 'angkringan' refers to a cart used to buy and sell food (Prasetyo, 2019).

One of the founders, namely source 4, described the situation when they were first formed: Indonesia was marked by strong reformist sentiment. At that time, the New Order regime had just collapsed (1998) and was replaced by a reform regime that carried out a series of fundamental changes towards democratisation. The change in regime from completely centralised to completely decentralised coloured the origins of this radio.

Initially, the Angkringan bulletin contained light news. Still, they raised sensitive issues over time using an investigative reporting model, including exposing corruption in aid to citizens through the Direct Cash Assistance policy. This bulletin is generally driven by journalism coverage, working like a weekly magazine. Each journalist must submit an issue or idea for coverage, and then an idea selection process will occur. This idea-selection process unconsciously makes journalists more sensitive and political when they encounter problems.

When radio was first developed, it consisted only of small talk. This characteristic is identical to the connotation of angkringan, which is directly taken from the bulletin's name. The news in the bulletin is deepened on the radio. The announcer discusses this with data and information interspersed with songs. Journalism products on the radio are not as dense as

bulletins. Conversations about sensitive matters are not necessarily conveyed on the radio. New issues must also be verified before they become material for the broadcaster's conversation.

Increasingly, Angkringan FM radio not only deepened the content of its bulletins but also began broadcasting live village representative council sessions, especially discussions of important issues. At that time, the response from residents was very warm, marked by incoming readers' letters or SMS (Short Message Service) to the editor of Angkringan FM. Residents are also more proactive in conveying information they feel is essential to Angkringan FM, hoping it will be followed up on in the news.

This point shows how interconnectedness is the primary source of community media's existence. Angkringan FM, both as a radio station and a social entity, continuously builds relationships with its community. Interconnectedness and non-hierarchical structure are the main characteristics of rhizomes. In the case of community media, this relationship applies to the critical role it can play in civil society and to the relationships it and other civil organisations can build with the state and society. Without losing its original identity, the market becomes incorporated and assimilated (Santana & Carpentier, 2010).

However, Angkringan FM's failure to understand the community's needs, especially in the aftermath of natural disasters and changing public dynamics, made it difficult to maintain connections with the community. When Yogyakarta was hit by an earthquake (2006) and Mount Merapi erupted (2010), Angkringan FM continued to play a significant role in disseminating information and advocating for residents, especially regarding aid distribution to affected residents. Angkringan FM stopped broadcasting in 2010 due to a lack of human resources to mobilise it and minimal involvement from the local community.

Meanwhile, BBM FM radio is the most established radio among all the community radio stations researchers interviewed. BBM FM was born in 1995 with the name Radio Suket Teki. In the 1997-1998 period, they were not actively broadcasting but resumed operations in 2000 under the BBM FM brand. BBM FM is a radio station owned by the Minomartani Cultural Centre or Balai Budaya Minomartani (Minomartani is where the cultural hall is located). Developing event programs and content involves cultural hall activities, such as wayang performances. The event program is very diverse and designed with high professionalism.

The various BBM FM programs can be accessed via Radio Garden (radio.garden) and the Radio BBM YouTube channel. Professionally, BBM FM is also actively participating in radio development grants. For example, in 2024, BBM FM received an Indonesian government grant for the Institutional Support Program, managed by the Directorate of Culture of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, Technology and Higher Education. This grant is used to revitalise broadcast programs and facilities.

Researcher interviews with BBM FM managers indicate that its advantage lies in its reliance on qualified, multidisciplinary personnel. According to source 1, by relying on individual networks and on the Minomartani Cultural Centre's presence, they overcame the challenges of community radio, which often ceased operating due to a lack of continuity.

BBM FM's vision is to be an educational information channel that disseminates knowledge, especially on Javanese and Indonesian culture, within the framework of preservation and development. According to researchers, this means BBM FM must expand its broadcast network. Source 1 said that they also target the diaspora abroad so they can enjoy their broadcasts via streaming.

Broadcast programs containing *gending*, *wayang* (art from Java) and musical content are also a way to continue to exist and embrace the community. BBM FM managers say this is also a differentiator from other radio stations, as they are the only ones producing content like this.

From the researcher's perspective, the success of BBM FM is the result of interconnectivity, manifested in community involvement, the use of technology, and programme events as a communication medium. The existence of BBM FM on the radio garden platform shows that discussions about community radio are irrelevant to geographical polarisation. Government funding achieved through the Indonesian programme also indicates that it cannot be viewed as pro-government or the opposite. Community claims emerge from the identity built and the involvement of the surrounding community, both in terms of content and management. At this point, discussions about distance-radius limitations, technology, and regulations become

irrelevant. This condition means that, in a broader sense, Law No. 32 concerning Broadcasting and Ministerial Regulation No. 39 of 2012 are far behind the times.

Another detailed finding is that radio content does not discuss typical Yogyakarta issues, such as the rubbish problem, crime (glitches), low minimum wages, and local political dynamics. BBM FM made this issue into news content in the form of a flash, which is hard news. Meanwhile, Saka FM and Swaka FM chose not to discuss it directly.

Saka FM management avoids discussing emerging socio-political issues. When Indonesia held a presidential election, Saka FM facilitated the General Election Commissions in their outreach. However, the chronicles and problems surrounding elections at the national and local levels have not been discussed in depth or critically.

Swaka FM also provides a portion of the program for socialisation for the Bantul district-level agencies. However, researchers see this as a top-down approach. On the other hand, there has been no effort to bring people's aspirations into a more significant (bottom-up) discussion.

### **Community radio and relevance to the community**

Community presence is significant for community radio. Therefore, maintaining relevance with the community is urgent. The research results show that closeness to the community is not formed through issue representation but through the radio's ability to meet people's entertainment needs. In general, the representation of the problems and advocacy for community interests are not the main aspects that make radio relevant to its community.

This finding means that the future of community radio, especially Swaka FM and BBM FM, which still exist today, must continue to be fought for. In other words, positioning the community, including the audience, as entities that depend on the existence of radio actually weakens community media in a strong rhizome structure. From a rhizome perspective, community media is not an entity that merely serves its audience (thus forming a mutually dependent relationship). More than that, the media must be able to become a connector in a fluid network. That is why, in a briefer explanation, the rhizome approach highlights fluidity in society and media (Santana & Carpentier, 2010). It means that media organisations can remain in local communities and simultaneously engage in trans-local networks (Santana & Carpentier, 2010).

The conclusion is based on several field findings, including interviews and observations. For example, this is evident in the way Swaka FM develops its broadcast content. Swaka FM builds its radio presence through two things: broadcast content and community involvement in off-air events. In its broadcasts, Swaka FM aims to maintain an interactive, informal tone. The interactivity in question involves listeners in the programs they create. For example, facilitating listeners to do karaoke by coming directly to the studio, live via telephone, or sending their voice recordings to be heard during the event broadcast.

This interactivity fosters closeness during and after the event by livestreaming on social media. In his interview, the manager of Swaka FM said that after being on-air, many people got to know them better. Likewise, people who interact with the event take special pride in being better known and often receive a lot of praise from listeners of the radio broadcast. These informal interactions make Swaka FM better able to serve as a media that facilitates residents' hobbies and entertainment rather than advocating for community issues.

Community involvement in off-air events such as celebrating Indonesian independence, charity events supporting orphans, and others helps foster closeness between Swaka FM and listeners. This closeness also makes residents willing to contribute to various radio financing projects. Swaka FM provides donors who help fund operations in return for business advertisements displayed during broadcasts. Source 2 called it a symbiotic mutualism.

In the context of Angkringan FM radio, the representation of issues and the community radio's ability to advocate for residents fosters closeness. The idealism makes Angkringan FM's presence relevant to listeners over the long term. However, the lack of resources to maintain the radio's presence and absorb public issues ultimately led to its decline. This condition was evident in the years before it ceased broadcasting, when entertainment broadcasts increased while political issues dwindled. Subsequently, new media emerged, seemingly replacing Angkringan FM as a catalyst for public matters. Angkringan FM's founders stated that the website they developed, [angkringan.web.id](http://angkringan.web.id), remained operational even after the radio broadcasts ceased.

### **Community radio and the crossroads**

The intersection of technology, regulation, and community issues is essential in shaping radio's ability to remain relevant to its community. In this section, the researcher also wishes to demonstrate how technology does not always emerge as the answer to the existence of community media. This way aligns with the research objective of using the Rhizome approach to move away from traditional, dichotomous perspectives.

In Law No. 32 concerning Broadcasting and Ministerial Regulation No. 39 of 2012, it has been determined that the transmission power of this media is low with a limited area coverage (Menteri Komunikasi dan Informatika RI, 2012; *Undang-Undang RI Nomor 32 Tahun 2002 Tentang Penyiaran*, 2002). On the one hand, technology can expand reach. However, expanding reach also has consequences for programming and content. The more local the content, the more it seems the program is not connected to listeners in a wide broadcast capacity.

The management of Saka FM stated that broadcast coverage restrictions were no longer a problem for them. Using all social media (YouTube, TikTok, Instagram) and live streaming using the website (<https://www.radiosakajogja.com/>) makes the radius limitation meaningless.

The development of social media has enabled Saka FM to improve constantly. One of them is creating interesting programs because, according to them, good programs will always get listeners. Plus, innovations that bring listeners closer to the broadcaster through the live Instagram feature. By utilising the broadcaster's followers, they are expected to also listen to Saka FM broadcasts.

Technology also makes the success parameters for an event program visible on social media—for example, the number of streamers and the amount of feedback on WhatsApp. Promoting events via Instagram and other social media is another way to invite listeners. The strategy also runs on Swaka FM, which often goes live on its Facebook page.

The BBM FM activist or source 1 stated that although the radio coverage is not limited to a 2.5 km radius, the spirit of 'from the residents for the residents' has not changed. The main challenge currently occurring is how to manage radio broadcasts seriously. The scale of their broadcast power means they don't want to be labelled as a random community radio station.

The presence of YouTube as an innovation during the pandemic also provides new enthusiasm. The number of viewers is also a concern. The visual characteristics of listeners, especially the younger generation, are also challenging, especially if they raise cultural themes that are not popular with young listeners. Until now, BBM FM has been looking for a formula to continue to survive in broadcasting cultural programs.

Swaka FM routinely goes live on Facebook when broadcasting. The goal is to expand radio reach so that more listeners can participate interactively. Apart from relying on listeners who come directly to the radio, the presence of social media can make their broadcasts reach far beyond 2.5 km. Swaka FM management even stated that the limited radius stipulated in the regulations was not something they regretted. The presence of technology means that it is no longer an obstacle.

Of the three radio stations that will still be broadcasting in 2024 (Swaka FM and BBM FM continue broadcasting until 2026), Swaka FM is the community radio station that uses social media the least. Interviews and observations show that many of their listeners still use radios with regular antennas. It shows that technology is not the only factor that keeps community media alive.

One of the Combine Research Institution (CRI) experts recognised the impact of technology, especially new media. Source 5 stated that during the 2013-2014 period, many community radio activities continued. However, as social media became a phenomenon in 2015-2016, the number of community radio stations decreased and has continued to decline. On the other hand, the emergence of new technologies makes it more challenging to define community radio. Researchers observe that the presence of social media indicates that the navigation of social issues needs to be sharpened. Social media does not necessarily demonstrate the relevance of technological adaptation, but it does change the way people live, including how they manage individual and community issues.

### **Community media through the lens of a rhizome**

In general, this research aims to answer two research questions: how community radio stations manage community issues in Yogyakarta and how they remain relevant to their communities. The research results show several interesting findings that answer the problem formulation.

First, the community radio stations (Saka FM, BBM FM, and Swaka FM) have experienced stagnation in capturing community realities. Socio-political issues, including local political dynamics, are currently a problem for Yogyakarta society. This condition arises because there is no connection or interconnection between community radio and the community's social and political concerns and awareness.

This lack of interconnection stems from regulations that have never positioned community radio to engage with other issues, actors, and organisations. For example, in rules, community media is defined by specific boundaries, such as Indonesian legal entities established by the community, independent and non-commercial, with limited transmission power and reach, and established to serve the interests of their community (Sjuchro et al., 2024). At this point, researchers observed that regulation actually placed community media in a position of polarisation, which the rhizome approach rejected. Thus, regulation in Indonesia systematically rendered community media irrelevant to their communities.

Entertainment content is often chosen because the public widely accepts it. Entertainment content with cultural nuances is part of a survival strategy and an effort to maintain a local feel, helping remain visible as community radio. Still, they run the radio business like a private radio. This condition aligns with the rhizome approach, which holds that the perspective that positions community media as alternative media is contingent, as what is considered alternative can become mainstream at another time (Carpentier et al., 2003b, 2003a).

Deleuze states that, from a rhizomatic perspective, community media is imagined as a network connecting various points (Carpentier, 2016). BBM FM can develop interconnections with organisational networks and other actors, but interconnections with countries and markets have not been implemented optimally. Relations with the government are still limited to funding efforts through grants. Efforts to cross national borders have been made but are still restricted to broadcast coverage and have not yet built a solid movement. Although BBM FM (and other radio stations) ignored these restrictions, this situation should not be overlooked.

Angkringan FM, which is no longer broadcasting, has the potential to function as a rhizome because it was built on high information needs and is managed according to journalism principles and reform ideals. The principles of journalism indirectly facilitate the rhizome spirit, the catalyst that connects many issues, interests, and actors.

At this point, the researcher states that community radio is stagnating in capturing the reality of the community because it has not been able to utilise its fluidity aspects in society and the media world. Efforts to build networks across organisations and actors have not been carried out optimally. Deleuze said that, from a rhizome perspective, community media are not just actors but also play a catalytic role and serve as a meeting point for various organisations and movements (Carpentier, 2007, 2016).

In the researcher's view, acting as a catalyst requires deep awareness to raise community issues and concerns about socio-political realities, and the ability to serve as a liaison between actors and organisations. The simple thing that can be maximised to become a catalyst is for the program to adopt this idea wherever possible by bringing together diverse opinions in the broadcast space. For example, a catalytic spirit can be realised when news or talk shows adopt wider community or societal concerns as part of uniting ideas and opinions. Extensive radio broadcasts are not only used to expand audience reach but also to link various interests.

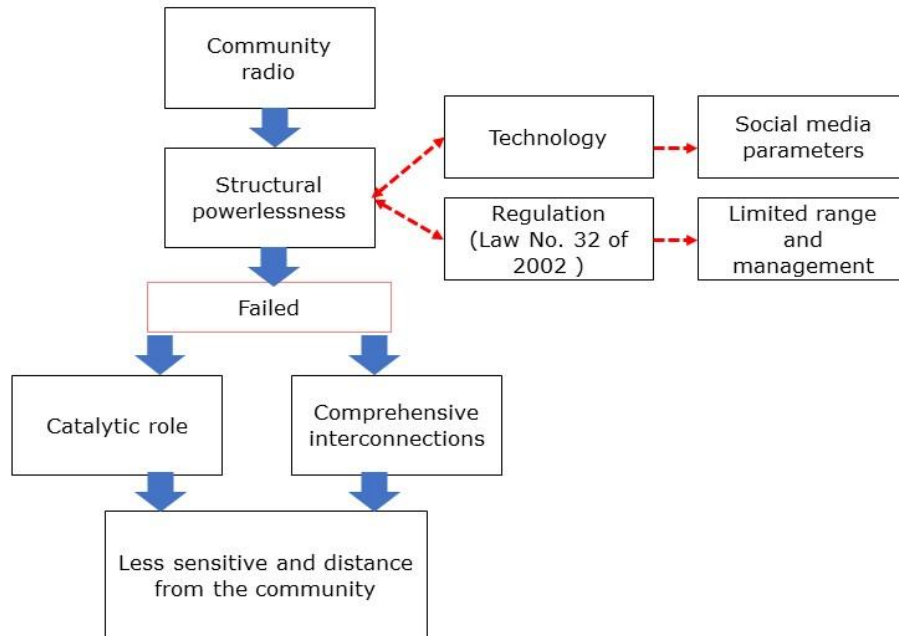
In the context of this research, this position is difficult for community radio to carry out. In the researcher's view, community radio experiences structural powerlessness to function as a rhizome, thereby unable to become a catalyst and build comprehensive interconnections. Once again, this is because regulations position community media as media with limited reach and management.

The second research result is that the relevance between community radio and its community is not based on the radio's ability to absorb community issues. In general, the representation of the problems and advocacy for community interests are not the main aspects that make radio relevant to its community.

Researchers find that the use of technology indirectly makes community radio less sensitive to socio-political realities and more focused on expanding its audience reach.

It is at this point that closeness to community issues becomes neglected. Social media presence also makes it easier for managers to expand their audience. On the one hand, the success of community radio is ultimately measured by social media metrics.

Researchers note that although the rhizome approach does not highlight the role of community media as a public space, but rather its catalytic role (Carpentier et al., 2003b, 2003a), the ability to become a public space also determines how community radio can become as a catalyst. The above explanation can be summarised in the chart below (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Summary of research results  
Source: Author (2026)

By becoming a public space, sensitivity and awareness will be built, fostering interconnections. By becoming a public space and a catalyst, community radio will become an instrument that not only voices community-related issues but also does much more. From a rhizome perspective, Deleuze states that community radio contributes to rearticulating impartiality and neutrality into involvement and grouping of people and organisations active in various struggles for equality (or other issues) (Santana & Carpentier, 2010).

## CONCLUSION

This research concludes with two significant findings. First, community radio has experienced stagnation in capturing community realities—especially socio-political issues, which are a problem for Yogyakarta society today. However, researchers consider that BBM FM has significant potential to play a larger role in bringing community issues to light, as it can build interconnectivity and break out of the dichotomy of community radio in terms of geography and management. Secondly, the relevance of community radio to its community is not based on its ability to address community issues, but rather on its role as an entertainment medium. This result means that the existence of community radio within the rhizome structure must continue to be fought for. From a robust perspective, interconnectivity is not only demonstrated through the radio's interaction with its listeners through programmes, but also through its role as a catalyst and connector between entities. In this case, entertainment content is not strong enough to sustain community radio.

In the context of this research, community radio's position as a rhizome is also challenging to achieve due to structural powerlessness. This condition stems from regulations

that position community media in a narrow dichotomy, relegating them to the bottom of the Indonesian media industry hierarchy. Limits on transmission power and funding make community media an 'alternative' to commercial media. Although these regulatory restrictions are often ignored by community radio, this has resulted in a low level of community media discourse in Indonesia.

In the future, the rhizome perspective in the context of community media in the digital landscape needs to be further developed to increase discourse on this issue across the academic and public spheres. This approach is also one way to overcome the problem of structural powerlessness.

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