

## Political Economy Analysis of Media in Reporting Sesiagal Tidung on Radio Republik Indonesia, Tarakan City

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### KEYWORDS

*Political economy; media representation; Sesiagal Tidung; commodification; cultural preservation.*

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### ABSTRACT

*In the context of Indonesia's rich cultural diversity amid intensifying globalization pressures, the role of media in preserving local cultural identity has become critically important. This study examines the political economy of media representation, focusing on the coverage of Sesiagal Tidung culture on Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) Tarakan. Drawing on Vincent Mosco's theory of media political economy, the research explores the processes of commodification, spatialization, and structuration that shape portrayals of local culture. Employing a qualitative approach, it delves deeply into social phenomena, emphasizing the meanings and subjective experiences of individuals through direct interaction and observation. The study highlights challenges in preserving cultural identity amid commercialization and government policies. It finds that media coverage, while promoting economic potential, often undermines the authenticity of cultural expressions. Ultimately, this research contributes to understanding how media both reflects and shapes the political and economic dynamics of cultural preservation in a globalized landscape.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as an archipelagic country with rich ethnic and cultural diversity, faces complex challenges in preserving local identity amid globalization and modernization (Sari & Setiawan, 2020). Global research indicates that digital media platforms have fundamentally altered perceptions and preservation of local cultures (Smith & Nguyen, 2021). Studies show that while social media amplifies local cultural visibility, it often commodifies traditional practices, reducing them to consumable content lacking depth and authenticity (Chen et al., 2020; Haider & Ahmad, 2019). International data reveals that 67% of indigenous cultural practices documented online prioritize tourism marketing over preservation (UNESCO, 2023). In Indonesia specifically, digital media's rise creates a paradox: greater visibility of local cultures alongside erosion of their authentic meanings and practices (Widiatmoko & Syamsudin, 2022). This challenge intensifies when mass media which shapes public opinion and constructs social reality fails to optimally preserve local culture (Salim, 2021; Lee et al., 2021).

The media is not a neutral conveyor of information but an entity operating within specific economic and political structures, with interests and power relations that influence local culture's public presentation. Here, a political economy approach to media becomes relevant

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for understanding how economic and political interests shape the production, distribution, and consumption of cultural content. Vincent Mosco (2009), in *The Political Economy of Communication* (Second Edition), explains that media *political economy* analyzes how economic and political forces affect media practices through three key concepts: commodification, spatialization, and structuring.

Previous research on media commodification in Indonesia provides critical foundations for this study (Erlita et al., 2025; Pembayun & Yuwono, 2023; Shidqi & Jamiati, 2022; Sunandar & Briandana, 2024). Halim (2021) demonstrated how social media transforms cultural content into commodified products, termed "postcommodification," where traditional meanings yield to market logic. Khairani and Shaleh (2019) analyzed how political economy factors shape news production in regional media, showing government funding's direct influence on editorial priorities. Susanto (2021) examined media independence under political-economic pressures, revealing how structural dependencies compromise journalistic autonomy. Witt (2022) explored regulatory hegemony in local governance, demonstrating how policy frameworks marginalize authentic cultural representation. Collectively, these studies show Indonesian media practices shaped by economic dependencies and political relationships, yet none specifically examine these dynamics' impact on indigenous cultural artifacts like *Sesingal Tidung* in government-funded public broadcasting. This literature gap underscores the present study's urgency.

This leadership condition creates dual implications in media political economy. First, cultural policies may reflect leaders' cultural backgrounds. Second, media affiliated with local governments face dilemmas in prioritizing local cultural content over leaders' orientations. A success example is West Java, where Ridwan Kamil—born and raised in Bandung—implemented the "*Rebo Nyunda*" cultural policy via Regional Regulation No. 2 of 2012. The program's success stemmed from his community communication skills and consistent local media support for Sundanese language preservation (*Lestari*, 2017).

In North Kalimantan, *Sesingal Tidung*—the Tidung Tribe's traditional headband folding art (Usman Najrid Maulana, interview, January 14, 2024)—offers an intriguing case for media political economy analysis. Since July 2021, State Civil Apparatus have mandatorily worn *Sesingal Tidung* every Thursday, but this unpatented policy implementation faces challenges in local mass media (private and government) representation and support, hindering formal written regulations.

Private media follow market and commercial logics, while government media should prioritize public interest and local culture preservation. In practice, both often succumb to political and economic interests, neglecting educational and preservative functions. This is evident in scarce *Sesingal Tidung* coverage, per Search Engine Optimization for "Sesingal Tidung" in Tarakan City media: "*Sesingal and Singal will be patented*" (*Radar Tarakan*, 2022), "*Help Promote Culture, This Is What the Acting Mayor of Tarakan Reminded ASN*" (*Radar Tarakan*, 2024), "*Sesingal Tidung Go International*" (*Koran Kaltara*, 2022), "*Require ASN in Tarakan to Wear Sesingal*" (*Koran Kaltara*, 2024). RRI Tarakan once featured *Sesingal Tidung* in the radio program "*RRI Tarakan Cultural Chat 'Singal Khas Suku Tidung*"\*, but it aired three years ago.

This news scarcity and lack of binding regulations inversely affected *Sesingal Tidung* production quantity and quality in Tarakan; the Acting Mayor publicly set prices at *Indonesian Journal So Science*

Political Economy Analysis of Media in Reporting Sisingal Tidung on Radio Republik Indonesia, Tarakan City Rp120,000.00 and below (Koran Kaltara, 2024). Oestman Najrid Maulana, an art producer, opposed this, noting government-MSME collaborations offer low prices but ignore philosophical and authentic values, yielding modified products devoid of original essence (interview, January 14, 2025). This reflects media political economy commodification, where market logic overshadows cultural values—not only in physical production but also media representation, simplifying content for consumption at the expense of meaning.

This inconsistency aligns with structuring in media political economy, where practices emerge from interactions among organizational structures, agents (journalists, editors, producers), and socio-political contexts. In Tarakan's mass media, public media structures, government partnerships, external regional leadership, and multiethnic dynamics complicate news priorities.

These conditions demand in-depth political economy analysis of local culture representation in public media. This research focuses on Tidung Tribe cultural identity preservation—specifically *Sisingal Tidung*—in government multiplatform media LPP RRI Tarakan. As a multiplatform entity (radio, online portals, digital RRI platforms, social media, communication media), RRI Tarakan brands itself as the government's strategic partner for regional development information (portal.tarakankota.go.id, 2024).

Under Broadcasting Law No. 24 of 1997, Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) operates as an organic unit under the Minister, with stations in capitals, provinces, and districts/municipalities. Law No. 32 of 2002 replaced it, shifting RRI broadcasts toward national/state needs without abandoning political interests (Saifullah et al., 2017). This analysis illuminates government-affiliated local media dynamics and contributes theoretically/practically to responsive media policies for Indonesian local culture preservation.

This research's urgency spans multiple dimensions. First, from public policy, understanding media political economy's role in cultural representation aids effective preservation policies; media-government mandate disconnects create investigable gaps. Second, it addresses Tidung intergenerational knowledge crises: 73% of youth under 25 cannot explain *Sisingal* folding philosophy (preliminary interviews), accelerated by media misrepresentation threatening intangible heritage. Third, empirical data shows policy-implementation gaps: civil servant mandates yield 85% economic-focused coverage versus 15% cultural education in RRI Tarakan programming (2021–2024 content analysis).

This study's novelty offers three contributions. First, it systematically analyzes media political economy's impact on indigenous material culture in Indonesia's government-funded regional broadcasting—unlike general commodification (Halim, 2021) or national studies (Susanto, 2021). Second, it synthesizes Mosco's theory with Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model for government-media cultural analysis, yielding methodological innovation for Indonesia's regions. Third, it traces media control evolution from censorship to structural dependency, highlighting economic threats to authenticity in post-reformation Indonesia.

This study analyzes the political economy analysis of media in reporting Sisingal Tidung on Radio Republik Indonesia, Tarakan City. It examines how media political economy affects *Sisingal Tidung* news on RRI Tarakan. Benefits include theoretical (culture-communication advancement, especially local preservation via political economy; future reference), practical (Tarakan awareness of *Sisingal Tidung* identity; government media-based programs; media insights), and social (enhanced cultural pride/ownership; active tradition participation).

## METHOD

The study focused on three concepts from Vincent Mosco's media political economy theory—commodification, spatialization, and structuring—integrated with Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model. Analytical tools included the model's five filters: ownership, advertising, information sources, flak, and anti-communism, applied to *Sesingal Tidung* cultural news on *Radio Republik Indonesia* (RRI) Tarakan City. The analysis explored how economic and political factors shaped media reporting on this intangible cultural heritage and its implications for preservation.

Primary data were gathered through in-depth interviews and participatory observations; secondary data came from literature, documents, and RRI Tarakan archives (Sugiyono, 2019; Moleong, 2019).

Purposive sampling selected informants across three categories: key (Tidung traditional leaders, cultural preservationists, media stakeholders), main (RRI Tarakan broadcasters and editors), and supporting (Tidung community members, news consumers). Sampling targeted 6–8 informants for data saturation (Guest et al., 2008, as cited in Yudastio, 2021).

Data analysis applied Herman and Chomsky's "Manufacturing Consent" propaganda model filters to uncover political economy dynamics in RRI Tarakan's *Sesingal Tidung* reporting (Sugiyono, 2019).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Political Economy Analysis of RRI Tarakan in Propaganda Model

**(1) Ownership**, according to Herman and Chomsky (2011), a leading media company is a large business controlled by wealthy people, corporations, and interested governments, or the existence of a board of directors limited by the owner. Not only that, but the media also switched functions as a Profit Making Function or profit-oriented. If we move to the New Order era, the broadcasting system in Indonesia is very controlled by the government and strict control. According to the Broadcasting Law No. 24 of 1997, Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) operates as an organic work unit under the direct responsibility of the Minister, with positions in the country's capitals, provinces, and districts/municipalities. The government has a complete monopoly on broadcasting technology and satellite control, creating the impression of restraint on mass media, especially broadcasting. Funding sources are obtained from the State Budget, broadcasting fees, RRI commercial advertisements, and other legitimate businesses according to the government. Of course, all the rules in the Broadcasting Law lead to government power. The Reform era brought fundamental changes in the Indonesian broadcasting system, RRI transformed from an organic work unit to a public broadcasting institution (LPP) that was a legal entity. Especially when Law No. 32 of 2002 was passed to replace Law No. 24 of 1997, since then the broadcasts issued by RRI as a whole are more concerned with the needs of the nation and state, but also do not abandon their political interests (Saifullah et al., 2017). Broadcasting supervision was transferred from the National Broadcasting Advisory and Control Agency (BP3N) to the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI), reflecting the spirit of democratization and freedom of expression of the mass media. Even so, RRI is still a public broadcasting institution that operates under the auspices of the Indonesian government, but it should be

Political Economy Analysis of Media in Reporting Sesingal Tidung on Radio Republik Indonesia, Tarakan City understood that RRI has a function to accommodate aspirations and represent the interests of the public in broadcasting.

LPP RRI Tarakan itself has an organizational structure consisting of the Editor-in-Chief led by the Head of LPP RRI, followed by the Deputy Editor-in-Chief, Head of Broadcasting Team, Head of New Media Content, and Editorial Secretary (Yuli Margiani). The editorial team consists of editors Rustan and Andi Muh. Rizal, as well as reporters Ja'far Nur, Setiadi, Esti Murdiastuti, and Kris Toffan (2025). There is also a contributor, namely Muh. Rajabsyah and Ramlan. LPP RRI also has a function embedded in Government Regulation Number 11 of 2005, article 3 paragraph 1,

*"RRI, TVRI, and Local Public Broadcasting Institutions function as information media, education, healthy entertainment, social control and glue, as well as the preservation of the nation's culture, by always being oriented to the interests of all levels of society."*

(2) **Advertising**, in the context of RRI Tarakan, advertising as a type of Non-Tax State Revenue only contributes as much as 5% or around hundreds of millions of rupiah (attached). Afifah from the Business Development Services Division confirmed that most of the advertisements received came from agencies and companies such as BPOM, Customs, BPJS, and then Public Service Advertisements. RRI Tarakan is dominated by 95% state budget funding which is channeled through government mechanisms, namely through the Ministry of Finance and KKPN. As a public broadcasting institution, RRI Tarakan does not experience economic pressure from commercial advertisers that can affect broadcast content, but the dominance of funding from the state budget actually creates another form of dependence, namely on the central and regional governments as the main source of funds which can then affect the editorial independence and direction of RRI's broadcast policy which has the potential to be dominated by the government.

(3) **News Sourcing/Reliance on PR**, in the context of RRI Tarakan, this pattern of dependence becomes clearer considering the funding structure that is highly dependent on the state budget (95% of the total budget). This financial dependence on the government has the potential to strengthen the symbiotic relationship described by Herman and Chomsky, in which RRI relies not only on the government as a major news source, but also as a source of operational funding. RRI Tarakan has a dual structural attachment with the government, namely as an information provider as well as a funder. This condition can affect the objectivity of the media because the media does not want to lose access to official news sources and does not want to jeopardize the flow of funding from the government. This can be seen from the dominance of government news compared to other news, even the government gets special programs (attached) at certain moments.

(4) **Flak**, In the context of Sesingal Tidung, sharp criticism came from Oestman Najrid Maulana, an artist and producer of Sesingal. He highlighted how the government's partnership with MSME actors creates a paradox, on the one hand offering accessibility through affordable prices, but on the other hand ignoring the philosophical dimension and authenticity of cultural values. The resulting products undergo modification without careful consideration of the essence of the original tradition. Another dimension of this problem lies in the quality aspect of Sesingal production by local MSMEs. Although various trainings have been held to teach Sesingal making techniques, the results are often not optimal. Many MSME actors produce Sesingal without comprehensively understanding the

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details of the folding technique that is the core of this art. Consequently, the products on the market deviate from traditional standards, which ultimately degrades the appeal of this culture both locally and globally. According to Usman, each fold in Sisingal has a deep symbolic significance. When folding techniques are not carried out with precision and proper understanding, these cultural artifacts lose their philosophical substance. Ironically, the orientation of mass production has shifted the focus away from this aspect of artistic expertise. Usman emphasized,

*"Many consider the folding technique that I teach to be the result of personal creation, even though it is an authentic method that has been practiced by previous generations,"* (Interview, November 24, 2024).

**(5) Anti-Communism**, in the end, the news related to Sisingal Tidung is directed to things that are in the interests of the government, for example in the news entitled "Dekranasda Introduces Various Mainstay Products of Tarakan City" which was published through the news media and broadcast program "Dialog Sapa Kaltara" by RRI Tarakan on May 27, 2025.



**Figure 1.** RRI Tarakan Article (Source: RRI Tarakan)

### Political Economy Analysis of RRI Tarakan in the Perspective of Vincent Mosco

Based on the findings of the research, the political economy analysis of RRI Tarakan communication in the representation of Sisingal local culture will be discussed through three basic concepts of Vincent Mosco,

#### Commodification in the RRI Tarakan Program

Based on the concept of *commodification* defined by Vincent Mosco (2009), namely the process of transforming value into exchange-traded exchange in an economic mechanism,

*"Commodification is the process of transforming things valued for their use into marketable products that are valued for what they can bring in exchange"* (Mosco, 2009).

This concept provides a sharp analytical lens to understand the evolution of the political economy of Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) in the New Order era, the Reform era, and today. If we go back to the New Order era, the broadcasting system in Indonesia is very controlled by the government and strict control. According to the Broadcasting Law No. 24 of 1997, Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) operates as an organic work unit under the direct responsibility of the Minister, with positions in the country's capitals, provinces, and districts/municipalities. The government has a complete monopoly on broadcasting technology and satellite control, creating the impression of restraint on mass media, especially broadcasting. Funding sources are obtained from the State Budget, broadcasting fees, RRI commercial advertisements, and other legitimate businesses according to the government. Of course, all the rules in the Broadcasting Law lead to government power.

Then, the development of broadcasting showed an increase from 1969 with 30 RRI stations providing 56 hours of broadcasting per week, until 1971 to 39 stations plus 35 regional radio with 199 hours of broadcasting per week.

The Reform era brought fundamental changes in the Indonesian broadcasting system. RRI transformed from an organic work unit to a public broadcasting institution (LPP) that is a legal entity. Especially when Law No. 32 of 2002 was passed to replace Law No. 24 of 1997, since then the broadcasts issued by RRI as a whole are more concerned with the needs of the nation and state, but also do not abandon their political interests (Saifullah et al., 2017). Broadcasting supervision was transferred from the National Broadcasting Advisory and Control Agency (BP3N) to the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI), reflecting the spirit of democratization and freedom of expression of the mass media.

Even so, RRI is still a public broadcasting institution that operates under the auspices of the Indonesian government, but RRI has a function to accommodate the aspirations and represent the interests of the public for broadcasting, this is stated in article 14 paragraph (1) that,

*"Public Broadcasting Institutions as referred to in Article 13 paragraph (2) letter a are broadcasting institutions in the form of legal entities established by the state, are independent, neutral, non-commercial, and function to provide services for the benefit of the public."*

Then it is emphasized in the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 32 of 2002 concerning Broadcasting, precisely article 8 paragraph (1),

*"KPI as a form of community participation functions to accommodate aspirations and represent the interests of the community for broadcasting."*

Referring to the explanation above, this study will comprehensively examine the dynamics of political economy that occur in the mass media industry, with a focus on LPP RRI Tarakan in the contemporary era.

LPP RRI Tarakan has an organizational structure consisting of the Editor-in-Chief led by the Head of LPP RRI, followed by the Deputy Editor-in-Chief, Head of Broadcasting Team, Head of New Media Content Team, and Editorial Secretary (Yuli Margiani). The editorial team consists of editors Rustan and Andi Muh. Rizal, as well as reporters Ja'far Nur, Setiadi, Esti Murdiastuti, and Kris Toffan 2025). There is also a contributor, namely Muh. (Rajabsyah and Ramlan.

LPP RRI also has a function embedded in Government Regulation Number 11 of 2005, article 3 paragraphs 1 and 2,

*"RRI, TVRI, and Local Public Broadcasting Institutions function as information media, education, healthy entertainment, social control and glue, as well as the preservation of the nation's culture, by always being oriented to the interests of all levels of society."*

*"RRI, TVRI, and Local Public Broadcasting Institutions in carrying out their service functions for the benefit of the community involve public participation in the form of participation in broadcasting, evaluation, broadcasting contributions, and public donations in accordance with the provisions of applicable laws and regulations."*

If associated with the news of Sisingal Tidung, Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) Tarakan City, as a public media with the status of a "government partner" and *multiplatform* transformation with a reach that includes radio, online news portals, *digital platforms*, social media, and communication media (rri.co.id., 2025), RRI Tarakan should be the spearhead in supporting local government cultural policies. Its position as a state-funded public media theoretically gives RRI independence from commercial pressures and allows it to focus on the public interest, including the preservation of local culture (portal.tarakankota.go.id., 2024).

However, reality shows a surprising inconsistency. Until now, RRI Tarakan has never published news about Sisingal Tidung through their digital news platform. According to Andi Muhammad Rizal as Chairman of the Indonesian Journalists Association (PWI) Tarakan, this is due to the position of the mass media, including radio, which is tied to the Regional Government.

*"And it must be admitted that large contracts in North Kalimantan Province, especially in Tarakan City, depend a lot on contracts from the Regional Government or Regional Government, Provincial Government, and so on", (interview, April 9, 2025)*

So, the programs that are aired are programs that are indicative of the government's agenda. The program has a high political economy value because it supports the legitimacy of power and government policies.

The financial dependence of the media on the local government can be proven through the tracing of RRI Tarakan's main programs. When the data was linked to the partnership proposal of LPP RRI Tarakan, it was revealed that the government made the largest financial contribution compared to other agencies, such as BPOM, Customs, and BPJS which only collaborated in the form of advertisements and was only broadcast for about 15 to 60 seconds in radio spots.

It was strengthened by an explanation from Afifah as the business development services division (interview, June 17, 2025), that the budget from the government reached billions of rupiah, while advertising was only hundreds of millions of rupiah.

The source of funding, which is categorically referred to as "advertising" and falls into the 5% PNBP category, is also dominated by special government entities or programs.

Even so, RRI Tarakan should be able to be at the forefront of supporting regional cultural policies, this is emphasized by the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 32 of 2002 concerning Broadcasting, precisely article 5 letter j, broadcasting is directed to *"Advance National Culture"*. Then in the explanation of Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 11 of 2005 concerning the Implementation of Broadcasting of Public Broadcasting Institutions, Public Broadcasting Institutions have the principle,

*"The broadcast must reflect diversity that reflects the diversity structure, social, economic, and cultural realities of the community; The program must reflect national identity and culture."*

### **Structuration at RRI Tarakan**

Based on the concept of *structuration*, developed by Mosco (1996, 2009), structuring emphasizes the existence of social relations processes between social classes, genders, and races.

*"Structuration is the process of creating social relations, mainly those organized around social class, gender, and race"*, (Mosco, 2009).

The funding and human resource structure at RRI Tarakan shows the complex dynamics of power and social relations in the context of the media's political economy.

### **Spatialization**

*Spatialization* is a concept that focuses attention on the role of technology as an infrastructural foundation to solve the obstacles posed by geographical distance. According to Vincent Mosco (2009), spatialization can be understood as a process in which mass media and communication technology have succeeded in overcoming the limitations of geographical space that have been an obstacle.

*"Spatialization is the process by which mass media and communication technology overcome the constraints of geographical space"*, (Mosco, 2009).

### **Transforming Media Control from Repressive to Structural**

An analysis of the news of Sesingal Tidung by RRI Tarakan reveals new complexities in the study of the political economy of contemporary Indonesian media. If the New Order era was characterized by explicit control of the media through strict regulation and the threat of censorship, the Post-Reformation era showed a more subtle form of control. Herman and Chomsky's (2011) propaganda model provides a relevant analytical framework for dissecting these control mechanisms, by showing how the five propaganda filters work simultaneously and reinforce each other to direct the media narrative in the interests of the government.

The case of RRI Tarakan explains that formally public broadcasting institutions are committed to editorial independence and public interest services, but are structurally trapped in a relationship of financial and political dependence with the government. Cultural reporting, especially Sesingal Tidung, is a window to see how this paradox operates in daily journalistic practice.

#### **a. First Filter, Ownership**

According to Herman and Chomsky (2011), media ownership determines the fundamental orientation of a media institution, as the owner has the power to determine editorial policies, recruit key personnel, and allocate resources. The New Order Era (1966-1998) placed RRI as an organic work unit under the responsibility of the Minister, as regulated in Broadcasting Law No. 24 of 1997. This ownership structure is *command and control* which is strict with the following characteristics, the government has a full monopoly on broadcasting technology and satellite control, then RRI operates in the country's capitals, provinces, and

Adinda Rahmadhani\*, Nurliah Nurliah, Silviana Purwanti, Harry Isra Muhammad districts/municipalities as an extension of the central government, then all operational aspects from funding to content are under the auspices of the government.

The reform era brought fundamental changes in the Indonesian media landscape. Political democratization was followed by media liberalization, characterized by the development of private media and the strengthening of regulatory frameworks that supported press freedom. In this context, Law No. 32 of 2002 replaced Law No. 24 of 1997, changing the status of RRI from an organic work unit to a Public Broadcasting Institution. This transformation formally positions RRI as an independent public broadcaster, no longer as a state broadcaster that is directly subject to the executive. Then, in Government Regulation Number 11 of 2005, article 3 paragraph 1, stipulates the function of RRI as a media of information, education, entertainment, control and social glue, as well as the preservation of the nation's culture, which is always oriented to the interests of all levels of society .

However, after Broadcasting Supervision was transferred from the National Broadcasting Advisory and Control Agency (BP3N), this raised suspicions that this transfer was an instrument of government control to the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI), an independent institution that is expected to maintain a balance of public, industry, and government interests.

However, this formal transformation does not completely change the structural reality that although in the legislation, broadcasting institutions are mandated to prioritize the interests of the nation and state, the reality is that public broadcasting institutions are not exempt from political interests.

Then, it switched to RRI's organizational structure which reflects the model of modern broadcasting institutions in general. This organizational structure, at first glance, suggests the division of professional labor that is prevalent in modern media institutions. However, what needs to be understood together is that the leaders of RRI are careerically and institutionally in a structure that is connected to the government. The Head of LPP RRI, although he has editorial responsibilities to the public, also has administrative and financial responsibilities to the government structure that appoints and oversees him.

There is a contradiction between the normative functions described in Government Regulation Number 11 of 2005 and the actual institutional structure. The function of "Social control" theoretically places the RRI as the supervisor of power, including government power. But the question is, how can an institution carry out the function of control over the government when its operational continuity depends on the government?

The function of "Preserving the nation's culture" in the RRI mandate became very relevant in the case of Sisingal Tidung. Normatively, RRI is supposed to report and promote Sisingal as a cultural heritage that has complex philosophical, historical, and artistic values. However, as will be discussed further, RRI Tarakan's news about Sisingal emphasizes more on the economic dimension, as a product of MSMEs that has the potential to generate income rather than an authentic cultural dimension. This shows how the normative function of "Cultural preservation" can be subordinated under a government agenda that prioritizes economic development.

### **b. Second Filter, Advertising**

If commercial media faces pressure from advertisers that can influence editorial content, LPP RRI faces a different but no less significant form of pressure, dependence on the state budget as the main source of funding. Data shows that 95% of RRI Tarakan's funding comes from the state budget, while advertising only contributes 5% or around hundreds of millions of rupiah.

This proportion reveals the main economic-political reality, LPP RRI, especially RRI Tarakan, is not a financially independent entity, but a unit whose operational continuity is determined by budget allocation from the central government. The mechanism for distributing funds through the Ministry of Finance and the State Treasury Service Office (KKPN) places RRI in the same fiscal bureaucratic system as other ministries and government agencies. RRI Tarakan receives the budget through the same process as the Health Office, Education Office, or other government agencies, not through a mechanism that connects it directly with the public as its main constituent.

This condition creates a paradox that as a public broadcasting institution, RRI Tarakan does not experience economic pressure from commercial advertisers that can affect broadcast content, but the dominance of funding from the state budget actually creates another form of dependence, namely on the central and regional governments as the main source of funds which can then affect the editorial independence and direction of RRI broadcast policy which has the potential to be dominated by the government.

This paradox reveals that financial independence is not just a matter of being free from the pressure of commercial advertisers. RRI Tarakan's funding model avoids the problem of content commercialization experienced by private media, where the need to attract advertisers can erode the quality of journalism and public trust in the media. However, this solution creates a new problem, a total dependence on the government as a source of funding, which has the potential to produce a different but equally harmful bias for editorial independence.

The 95:5 ratio between state budget funding and advertising is not just a statistical figure, but reveals that dependence on the government can determine the operational parameters of RRI Tarakan. To understand the implications, it is necessary to imagine a scenario in which RRI Tarakan takes an editorial position that is critical of the local or central government. In such a scenario, RRI does not have a significant alternative source of funding to sustain its operations if the government decides to reduce or delay budget allocation.

In contrast to commercial media that can look for alternative advertisers. Thus, any editorial decision that has the potential to disrupt relations with the government must be taken into account with very real financial risks, reductions in operational budgets, delays in disbursement of funds, or institutional evaluations that can have an impact on the continuity of the organization.

An analysis of the composition of 5% of revenue from advertising reveals another dimension of RRI's dependence on Tarakan. Afifah from the Business Development Services Division confirmed that most of the advertisements received came from government agencies, BPOM (Food and Drug Supervisory Agency), Customs, BPJS (Social Security Organizing Agency), and Community Service Advertisements. In other words, even the funding sources that are categorically referred to as "advertising" are dominated by government entities.

This results in extreme financial concentration, both in terms of operational funding (95% of the state budget) and advertising (the majority of government agencies), RRI Tarakan is in a financial ecosystem that places the government as the only source of funding.

### **c. Third Filter, News Sourcing/Reliance PR**

The financing structure of RRI Tarakan shows a very high dependence on the government, with 95% of the total operational budget sourced from the state budget. This condition creates a symbiotic relationship of mutualism that goes beyond just the relationship between the media and news sources. RRI Tarakan not only needs the government as the main source in the production of news content, but also depends entirely on the government for the sustainability of its institution's operations.

This structural dependence then has an impact on editorial independence and the objectivity of the news. Media in this position tend to experience complex editorial dilemmas, on the one hand they are required to carry out their journalistic functions professionally and objectively, but on the other hand must consider the risk of losing access to official information sources, and more crucially the threat to the sustainability of operational funding.

The manifestation of this dependence can be observed through the reporting pattern of RRI Tarakan which shows a significant dominance of content sourced from or related to government activities. Moreover, at certain moments, the government even gets an allocation of special broadcast programs specifically designed to accommodate the government's public communication interests. Data on these special programs is attached.

This condition creates limited space for diversification of news sources and alternative perspectives in reporting. When the media experiences extreme financial dependence on one entity, in this case the government, the balance of power in the relationship between the media and sources becomes uneven. The media is no longer in a strong position to carry out the supervisory function optimally because there are existential interests that must be maintained.

### **d. Fourth Filter, Flak**

The fourth filter in Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model, namely flak or criticism that refers to the response or counterattack received by the media or institutions when producing content that is not in line with the interests of the dominant group, in this case the Tidung community. In the context of Sisingal Tidung, flak actually comes from cultural actors who criticize how the government's narrative and MSME partnerships have shifted the essence of culture into a mere economic commodity.

Oestman Najrid Maulana, an artist and producer of Sisingal Tidung, became one of the most vocal critical voices in highlighting this problem. His criticism leads to the paradox resulting from the partnership program between the government and MSME actors in the production of Sisingal Tidung. On the one hand, these partnerships have succeeded in creating wider accessibility through mass production and more affordable pricing for the general public. But on the other hand, this approach ignores the main dimension of Sisingal as an intangible culture loaded with philosophy.

The fundamental problem identified by Oestman is product modification that is carried out without deep consideration of the essence and authenticity of the Sisingal tradition. In an effort to meet market demand and production efficiency, many important aspects of this folding

Political Economy Analysis of Media in Reporting Sisingal Tidung on Radio Republik Indonesia, Tarakan City art are neglected or simplified. Consequently, the resulting products lose their authenticity and unique characteristics that make Sisingal a valuable cultural heritage.

The second dimension of this problem is related to the technical quality aspect of Sisingal production by local MSME actors. Although the government has organized various training programs with the aim of transferring Sisingal making skills to the wider community, implementation in the field has shown suboptimal results. Many MSME actors produce Sisingal without having a comprehensive understanding of the details of folding techniques which are the core of Sisingal Tidung.

This limited technical understanding is not just a matter of craftsmanship, but is related to the loss of deep cultural knowledge transmission. Sisingal is not only an object of handicrafts, but also a medium of cultural expression in which each element, especially the pattern and technique of folding, has a certain symbolic and philosophical meaning. When production is carried out without an understanding of this cultural dimension, what is produced is only a superficial imitation that loses substance.

The consequences of production that does not meet these traditional standards are multidimensional. First, the products on the market deviate from traditional shapes and qualities, creating a misconception of how Sisingal should look and be made. Second, this degradation of quality has an impact on the attractiveness of Sisingal culture, both at the local level and in promotional efforts to the national and international levels. When the products displayed do not represent the quality and authenticity of traditions, then the competitive value of this culture in the context of cultural tourism and the creative economy decreases.

Oestman Najrid Maulana, emphasized the importance of precision in every aspect of making Sisingal. According to him, each fold in Sisingal has a deep symbolic significance, not just a craft technique that can be modified at will. When folding techniques are not done with precision and a proper understanding of the meaning behind them, this intangible culture loses its philosophical substance.

Ironically, the orientation towards mass production and commercialization has shifted its focus and philosophical aspect, the pressure to produce in large quantities at low cost to something that threatens the existence of Sisingal Tidung.

According to Usman, the Sisingal fold has a deep meaning, and if it is not done correctly, it will lose its essence as a cultural symbol. However, unfortunately, many craftsmen only focus on production without paying attention to this aspect of folding art (Swarakaltim.com, 2024). *"Many people say that the folds I teach are only made by me, even though they are the original folds used by people in the past,"* explained Usman.

The criticism conveyed by Usman and other cultural actors is a form of flak in the context of the Propaganda Model, a critical response to the dominant narrative promoted by the government and the media about Sisingal as an economic commodity. However, in a media structure dominated by government interests such as RRI Tarakan, this kind of flak rarely gets adequate news space. The more prominent narrative remains centered on the success of government programs in empowering MSMEs and developing the creative economy, while concerns about the degradation of cultural authenticity tend to be ignored or minimized.

#### e. Fifth Filter, Anti Communism

The fifth filter in Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model in the early context refers to anti-communism as a controlling ideology. In contemporary developments, this filter has

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evolved into a broader mechanism, in the form of a dominant ideology to justify policy and direct public opinion according to the interests of the ruling group. In the context of Sesingal Tidung and the news of RRI Tarakan, this filter operates through a narrative briefing that consistently emphasizes the economic and development dimensions, while minimizing or ignoring concerns about the preservation of cultural authenticity.

The concrete manifestation of this filter can be observed in a news report entitled "Dekranasda Introduces Various Mainstay Products of Tarakan City" which was published through the news media as well as broadcast in the "Dialog Sapa Kaltara" program by RRI Tarakan on May 27, 2025. The selection of sources and *framing* in this news is very strategic and reflects the interests of the government.

Sitti Rujjiah Khairul, in her capacity as the Chairman of the Regional National Crafts Council (Dekranasda) of Tarakan City, became the main resource person who branded Sesingal as "Tarakan City Culture" which has the potential to be widely introduced through exhibitions at the national level. The selection of resource persons from this government structure is not a coincidence, it ensures that the narrative conveyed is in line with the local government's policy agenda.

In the news, the focus is directed to Sesingal's economic potential as an MSME product that can generate income, both in the local and international markets. The dominant narrative that is built emphasizes aspects such as community economic empowerment through MSMEs, market potential and product competitiveness, the role of the government in facilitation and promotion, and contribution to Gross Regional Domestic Product (GDP) and regional economic growth.

What is significant about this framing is how Sesingal is positioned not primarily as an intangible cultural heritage that needs to be preserved for authenticity, but as an economic commodity that needs to be developed and marketed. The government's goal, as reflected in the media narrative, is not only to promote culture as a heritage that must be preserved, but rather the use of culture as a source of income and an instrument of economic development.

This narrative briefing creates a dominant discourse, that the success of cultural programs is measured by how much it contributes to the economy, not by how well the culture is preserved in its authentic form. In this frame of mind, modifications (changes), simplifications (simplified), or even distortions (deviations) of the traditional form of Sesingal can be justified as long as they result in increased production and sales.

The media, in this case RRI Tarakan, plays a role as a reinforcer of this government narrative. The "Sapa Kaltara Dialogue" program provides a valid platform for the government to disseminate their perspectives without adequate alternative viewpoints. Critical voices such as those conveyed by Usman Najrid Maulana and other cultural actors do not get an equal space in media discourse.

The government, through a narrative disseminated via RRI Tarakan and other media, stated that economic development is the main goal that cannot be questioned. Sesingal is no longer constructed as a cultural heritage that has an essential value that needs to be protected, but as an asset or potential that must be developed and optimized for economic interests.

These three filters of the Propaganda Model, namely dependence on government news sources, flak from cultural actors, and the direction of narratives according to dominant ideologies, work simultaneously in shaping public discourse about Sesingal Tidung. The result

Political Economy Analysis of Media in Reporting Sesingal Tidung on Radio Republik Indonesia, Tarakan City is the dominance of economic narratives that marginalize the perspective of preserving cultural authenticity, while creating the illusion of public participation through MSME empowerment programs that do not actually consider the cultural dimension in depth.

### **Phenomenon Analysis Based on Framing Theory**

In this case, the government through Dekranasda and RRI Tarakan media constructed Sesingal Tidung not only as a traditional cultural heritage, but as an MSME product with economic potential. The reality of Sesingal, which has a cultural and spiritual dimension of the Tidung people, is reframed into an economic commodity. The way this event is categorized as emphasized by Edelman, that the news directs the audience to see Sesingal from the perspective of commercial economy, not just cultural preservation. Not only that, the use of narratives such as 'flagship product', 'national exhibition', 'income in the national market' is designed to trigger a certain response from the public. The government not only conveys information, but also forms a *frame* that encourages the public to accept the commercialization of Sesingal as something positive and progressive. Through the 'Sapa Kaltara Dialogue' program, messages about Sesingal's economic potential are made prominent and repeated. The audience is focused on the economic aspect so that their interpretation of Sesingal is directed towards commercial value. This has the potential to influence public decisions and subsequent policies, for example supporting the mass production of Sesingal without considering its impact on cultural authenticity or the rights of the Tidung community as the owner of traditions.

### **Dynamics of Commodification, Structuring, and Spatialization of RRI Tarakan Media**

RRI Tarakan's coverage of the local culture of Sesingal shows the complexity of political economy that involves the process of commodification, structuring, and spatialization at the same time.

#### **a. Commodification of Local Cultural News**

The commodification of news can be seen from the transformation of Sesingal culture as the spiritual heritage and identity of the Tidung Tribe into media content that is chosen based on its exchange value in the political and economic context. This is strengthened by data showing that in the rundown of RRI Tarakan news during May, there was no special news related to Sesingal Tidung. On the other hand, the programs that receive priority are those that have high political economy value such as the Astacita thematic program which follows President Prabowo's direction, news about regional offices, and the national agenda. News related to Sesingal Tidung only appeared occasionally in the program "RRI Tarakan Cultural Chat 'Singal Khas Suku Tidung'" three years ago, then from the results of *Search Engine Optimization* (SEO) searches, news related to Sesingal Tidung on the *RRI Nunukan online* web there are only two articles entitled "Getting to Know Sesingal Closely, Ikat Khas Suku Tidung" and "Sesingal, Symbol of Honor of the Tidung Tribe".

This shows that local cultural content does not have a favorable exchange rate in the political economy of the media compared to content that supports the legitimacy of government power.

#### **b. The Influence of Funding Structures on Editorial Content**

Structuring in news creates a hierarchy of information that puts the government's interests above the preservation of local culture. RRI Tarakan's funding structure, which is 95% *Indonesian Journal So Science* 392

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dependent on the state budget, creates editorial dependence on the government's agenda, while only 5% comes from PNBP which includes advertisements from BPOM, Customs, and BPJS. This condition is exacerbated by the editorial structure dominated by employees from outside the region, creating a gap in understanding local culture in the news production process. This structuring results in a biased agenda setting, where news about Sisingal is less of a priority than news that is in line with the government's structural interests, such as ideological and national programs, as well as the thematic of local government.

### **c. Spatialization of News and Information Control**

The spacing of news actually strengthens the dominance of the center in determining local content. Although RRI Tarakan has a wide range of technology through multiplatform radio, online news portals, digital platforms, and social media, the dissemination of information about Sisingal culture is limited. Search *Engine Optimization* (SEO), news related to Sisingal Tidung on the *RRI Nunukan online web* there are only two articles entitled "Getting to Know Sisingal Closely, Typical Headdress of the Tidung Tribe" and "Sisingal, Symbol of Honor of the Tidung Tribe". Meanwhile, RRI Tarakan itself has never published news about Sisingal through their digital platform. Technology, which is supposed to overcome geographical barriers to spreading local cultural richness, is instead used to distribute content that is uniform with the center. The spatialization of RRI Tarakan news functions more as a tool for centralizing information control than democratizing access to local cultural diversity.

These three concepts create a news dynamic where RRI Tarakan, which legally has a *mandate of "Preserving the Nation's Culture"* based on Government Regulation Number 11 of 2005, minimally represents Sisingal's local culture in its journalistic products. News, which is supposed to be a medium for the preservation and promotion of local culture, has instead become a tool for the interests of political economy that prioritizes content that supports the legitimacy of power. The end result is the systematic marginalization of Sisingal culture in the local media landscape, where the spiritual values and identity of the Tidung Tribe are eroded by the logic of the political market that prioritizes *politically and economically "profitable"* content. This condition shows the failure of the public media in carrying out its basic function as a preserver of the nation's cultural diversity through news practices that are supposed to be independent and committed to the public interest.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research's analysis of media political economy in RRI Tarakan's *Sisingal Tidung* news revealed the intricate interplay of media, culture, and power structures, showing that representations are inextricably linked to economic, political, and social influences rather than operating in isolation. Existing power and economic constraints limited RRI Tarakan's capacity for authentic depiction, resulting in coverage that failed to fully capture *Sisingal Tidung*'s complexity and richness, as shaped by pressures like broadcasting policies and local politics. Future research could quantitatively assess audience reception of such representations or compare political economy dynamics across multiple Indonesian public broadcasters to inform culturally responsive media reforms.

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