

Community Participation in Citizen Journalism and Its Development towards Homeless Media: A Narrative Literature Review

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Abstract: The rapid development of internet technology has transformed audiences from passive consumers into active producers of information through citizen journalism. This study examines the relationship between citizen journalism and homeless media, identifies their characteristics, and explains their implications for digital communication and contemporary journalism. The research employs a Narrative Literature Review (NLR) by analyzing 35 publications retrieved from Google Scholar, Scopus, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, ProQuest, and Garuda. Data analysis involves description, interpretation, and synthesis to identify key themes and conceptual relationships across previous studies. The findings indicate that citizen journalism provides the foundation for public participation in information production, while homeless media represents an emerging media form developed from these participatory practices. Both are characterized by decentralized content production, active public participation, extensive use of digital platforms, and rapid information dissemination. However, homeless media also faces challenges related to weak verification mechanisms, limited accountability, and inconsistent journalistic ethics. The study concludes that citizen journalism and homeless media complement each other in fostering a more democratic and participatory digital media ecosystem. Strengthening media literacy, digital platform governance, and communication ethics is therefore essential to maintain information quality, credibility, and public trust in the evolving digital public sphere.

Keywords: *Homeless Media, Citizen Journalism, Community Participation, Digital Media, Narrative Literature Review*

Introduction

The digital revolution that has been underway since the late 1990s has fundamentally transformed the media ecosystem. The emergence of the internet, social media platforms, and smart communication devices has created conditions that make it possible for anyone to become a news producer. This phenomenon gave rise to the concept of citizen journalism, a practice in which individuals from various walks of life take an active role in gathering, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news and information. This practice has evolved with the increasing affordability of digital devices and easier access to content distribution platforms, blurring the boundaries between information producers and consumers. This, in turn, has fostered various forms of public participation in news production that were previously limited to formal media institutions.

Public participation in information production is not a new phenomenon. However, its scale, speed, and impact in the digital age far exceed previous forms of media participation, such as letters to the editor or interactive phone-ins on radio. Bowman and Willis (2003) note that the emergence of We Media marks a paradigmatic shift from one-to-many to many-to-many communication. This shift demonstrates that digital technology has not only transformed



the way news is delivered but also transformed the power relations between media institutions and their audiences. Previously passive audiences now have the capacity to independently produce, distribute, and even verify information, although this capacity is not always met with adequate journalistic standards.

What makes this phenomenon particularly urgent to examine at this moment is the scale at which social media platforms now mediate public participation in news production. Citizen journalism today is no longer confined to occasional eyewitness reporting; it operates as a continuous, platform-embedded practice that, over time, can produce entirely new media entities existing independently of any parent institution. It is precisely at this point of transition from participation within existing media to participation that generates new media that the phenomenon of homeless media becomes analytically significant, since homeless media is best understood as the institutional outcome of sustained citizen-journalism practice rather than as an unrelated media category. Understanding this dual phenomenon matters because, as citizen participation in news production intensifies on social media, urgent questions arise about who is accountable for the quality, credibility, and social role of media entities that emerge without any institutional anchor.

This shift from one-to-many to many-to-many communication has not only transformed content production patterns but also created space for new media forms to emerge outside existing institutional structures. One of the most prominent manifestations of this shift is the emergence of so-called homeless media, namely media forms that lack a permanent institutional home, are not tied to a legal entity, do not have a formal editorial office, and are independent of conventional media ownership structures. Homeless media exists in various forms, from individual blogs, community YouTube channels, local news Telegram groups, to collectively managed citizen news portals. The presence of homeless media reflects a real democratization in the information ecosystem, while also raising serious questions about accountability, verification, and journalistic standards that have long been benchmarks for the quality of professional journalistic products.

These questions demonstrate that the phenomena of citizen journalism and homeless media are conceptually and practically interconnected. However, the extent to which academic literature addresses this link remains to be explored. Several studies, such as Wall (2015) and Jurrat (2011), describe the development of citizen journalism in depth, but fail to discuss how this phenomenon relates to the growth of informal media structures such as homeless media. Conversely, studies of alternative media (Atton, 2002; Kenix, 2011) tend not to explore the role of citizen participation as a formative mechanism.

A broader review of the existing scholarship confirms both the breadth of research on citizen journalism and the comparative scarcity of work that connects it explicitly to homeless media. Internationally, foundational studies established the conceptual vocabulary of the field: Gillmor (2004) framed citizen journalism as grassroots reporting enabled by digital tools; Bowman and Willis (2003) proposed the “We Media” paradigm; Rosen (2006) theorized the transformation of “the people formerly known as the audience” into producers; Hermida (2012)



introduced the notion of ambient journalism; and Carpenter (2010) empirically compared the content diversity and verification standards of citizen and professional news outlets.

More recent bibliometric and scoping work — Segado-Boj's (2020) review of social-media-and-journalism scholarship from 2003 to 2017 and Nah et al.'s (2024) thirty-year retrospective of citizen-journalism scholarship from 1994 to 2023 — shows that the field has matured in volume but recently declined in output even as new platform dynamics, including generative AI, reopen its research agenda; Peña-Fernández et al. (2024) similarly find that audience participation in newsrooms has become increasingly constrained, describing it as “mediatised participation” rather than genuine co-production.

In parallel, the alternative- and radical-media tradition — Downing (2001), Atton (2002), Kenix (2011), Bruns (2008) — developed an adjacent but separate vocabulary for media situated outside institutional ownership. In the Indonesian context, Yuniar (2018) documented the dynamics of citizen-journalism practice on new media platforms such as Kompasiana and NET CJ, while national data (We Are Social, 2024) illustrates the scale of internet and social-media penetration that sustains such practices domestically.

Taken together, at least ten prior studies from both international (Gillmor, 2004; Bowman & Willis, 2003; Rosen, 2006; Hermida, 2012; Carpenter, 2010; Wall, 2015; Jurrat, 2011; Atton, 2002; Kenix, 2011; Segado-Boj, 2020; Nah et al., 2024; Peña-Fernández et al., 2024) and national (Yuniar, 2018) journals establish citizen journalism and alternative/homeless media as well-studied but largely separate literatures. None of these studies, however, treats the transition from citizen participation to the formation of an independent, non-institutional media entity as its central object of analysis. This is precisely the gap this article addresses, and its novelty lies in proposing citizen participation not merely as a contributing factor to, but as the formative mechanism through which homeless media emerges. This conceptual gap prompted this article, which hopes to provide a more comprehensive framework for understanding how citizen participation in journalism contributes to the formation of informal media ecosystems in the digital age.

Based on this description, this article aims to: (1) analyze the conceptualization of citizen journalism and its various dimensions; (2) map the development of homeless media as an informal media ecosystem; (3) examine the relationship between citizen participation in citizen journalism and the growth of homeless media; and (4) identify the significance of this phenomenon for the democratization of information and the contemporary media landscape. Through the Narrative Literature Review approach, this article attempts to synthesize findings from various traditional studies that have developed separately, so that it can provide conceptual contributions to the development of citizen journalism and alternative media studies in Indonesia and globally.

Citizen Journalism

The concept of citizen journalism has become one of the most productive discourses in contemporary communication studies. Gillmor (2004) describes this phenomenon as a situation in which grassroots journalists use digital tools to tell stories overlooked or under-reported by



mainstream media. This definition emphasizes two important aspects: the technological dimension, which involves the use of digital tools, and the social dimension, which involves grassroots involvement. These two dimensions complement each other in explaining how ordinary citizens can act as information producers without having to go through conventional media institutions, while also emphasizing that citizen journalism arose from the need to fill spaces unreached by mainstream media coverage.

Hermida (2012) expands on this concept by introducing the notion of ambient journalism, a condition in which the continuous flow of information from citizens creates a collective awareness of ongoing events. Within this framework, citizen journalism is not simply the act of reporting on specific events, but rather a social practice that occurs continuously and spreads across various platforms. The notion of ambient journalism is important because it demonstrates that citizens' contributions to the information ecosystem do not always take the form of a single, coherent report, but rather fragments of information that, when combined, form a collective picture of an event in real time.

Wall (2015) identifies at least four main typologies of citizen journalism based on their level of participation and institutionalization: pure, completely independent citizen journalism; citizen journalism integrated into mainstream media, such as reader columns or photo contributions; citizen journalism organized on dedicated platforms like OhmyNews in South Korea; and citizen journalism within hyperlocal communities. This typology demonstrates that citizen journalism is not a homogeneous phenomenon, but rather a broad spectrum with varying degrees of formalization, each with different implications for the quality, reach, and sustainability of its journalistic products.

In the Indonesian context, empirical evidence supports this typology. Yuniar (2018) traces how citizen-journalism practice migrated from independent blogging toward platforms integrated into mainstream media outlets, such as Kompasiana (owned by Kompas) and NET CJ (owned by Net Mediatama), illustrating Wall's (2015) second typology citizen journalism absorbed into existing media institutions — while grassroots, community-based practice consistent with Wall's fourth typology continues to persist in hyperlocal reporting. This dual pattern is reinforced by national internet-penetration data: We Are Social (2024) records more than 185 million active internet users in Indonesia, a scale sufficient to sustain both institutionally integrated and fully independent citizen-journalism practices simultaneously. The Indonesian case therefore illustrates that citizen journalism is not a uniform import of a Western concept, but a practice that adapts to local media ownership structures, platform ecosystems, and press-freedom conditions. (Note to authors: the reviewer additionally pointed to a book on “Jurnalisme Warga, Hegemoni, dan Rusaknya Keragaman Informasi” and a *Kajian Jurnalisme* (Unpad) article; both should be reviewed directly and cited with full bibliographic detail, as they could not be retrieved with verifiable metadata through the search tools available for this revision.)

Homeless Media



The term “homeless media” refers to media that lacks a permanent institutional home, that is, media that operates outside the formal structures of the established media industry. This concept is rooted in a long tradition of alternative and radical media, as studied by Downing (2001) and Atton (2002). Downing (2001), in his book “Radical Media,” documented how social movements throughout history have always needed their own media to convey counter-narratives. From underground newspapers to revolutionary pamphlets, the existence of media outside the control of established institutions has been an integral part of socio-political dynamics, demonstrating that the need for alternative media spaces existed long before the digital era.

Atton (2002) developed a broader concept of alternative media, encompassing media that actively challenge or exist outside the norms of dominant media production and distribution. In the digital context, homeless media takes on more diverse and easily established forms than alternative media forms of previous eras. This ease is supported by lower technical barriers to producing and distributing content, allowing anyone with internet access to create their own information channels without requiring significant institutional capital. The main characteristics of contemporary homeless media include five aspects.

First, independence from large institutional capital. Second, a fluid and often collective management structure. Third, a sustainability model that relies on community support, whether in the form of donations, voluntary subscriptions, or volunteer work. Fourth, an orientation toward issues neglected by mainstream media. Fifth, high platform flexibility, which allows homeless media to move from one distribution channel to another according to the dynamics of platform policies and audience preferences.

This raises a conceptual question that must be addressed directly: is homeless media simply a contemporary label for alternative media, or does it constitute a distinct category? Atton's (2002) definition of alternative media is fundamentally oppositional it identifies media that consciously challenge dominant production and distribution norms, often around an explicit political or social cause, a stance shared by Downing's (2001) account of radical media tied to social movements. Homeless media, by contrast, is defined structurally rather than ideologically: what unifies homeless-media outlets is the absence of a stable institutional home no legal entity, no fixed editorial office, no conventional ownership not necessarily an oppositional political stance.

In practice, the two categories overlap substantially: a community YouTube channel documenting a local land dispute is both institutionally homeless and, in Atton's sense, alternative, because it challenges a dominant narrative. The categories are not fully coextensive, however: a hyperlocal lifestyle or news Telegram group can be institutionally homeless lacking a legal entity or formal ownership without being alternative in Atton's oppositional sense, since it may simply replicate mainstream news values and formats without adversarial intent. Homeless media is therefore best understood as the broader, structural category, of which oppositional alternative media forms one subtype and non-oppositional, purely informal news practice forms another.



The link to citizen journalism follows from this structural definition. Citizen journalism, as reviewed above, describes a practice who produces news and how. Homeless media describes an outcome the kind of media entity that practice produces once it accumulates and stabilizes outside institutional structures. Not all citizen journalism becomes homeless media, since much of it remains embedded in mainstream platforms, following Wall's (2015) second typology; but virtually all homeless media originates from citizen-journalism practice, because it is precisely the absence of institutional backing that necessitates reliance on citizen contributors, community funding, and volunteer labor for both production and sustainability.

Methods

This research uses the Narrative Literature Review (NLR) method, an interpretive approach to reviewing existing literature to build a comprehensive understanding of a topic (Green et al., 2006). Unlike systematic reviews or meta-analyses, which emphasize rigorous search protocols and quantitative analysis, NLR provides greater flexibility in selecting and interpreting sources, making it more suitable for conceptual and dynamically evolving topics. This flexibility was a key consideration for the researcher, given that the topics of citizen journalism and homeless media continue to evolve along with changes in the technological landscape and digital platforms.

Torraco (2005) explains that NLR is highly suitable for identifying, analyzing, and synthesizing developments in knowledge within a field, particularly when the goal is to build a new conceptual framework or identify gaps in the existing literature. In the context of this research, NLR was chosen for three primary reasons. First, the topics of citizen journalism and homeless media are rapidly evolving areas with terminology and conceptual boundaries still being negotiated. Second, the relationship between the two phenomena requires in-depth interpretive analysis. Third, the existing literature is spread across various disciplines, including communication, sociology, political science, and media studies, necessitating an approach capable of bridging these diverse disciplinary perspectives.

As a form of methodological accountability, this study recognizes that the NLR is inherently vulnerable to selection bias given its characteristic flexibility in source selection. To minimize this risk, several mitigation measures were implemented. First, the selection process from 187 initial sources to 35 final sources was conducted in stages and documented based on predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria, ensuring that inclusion decisions were not ad hoc. Second, the researchers actively sought a diversity of perspectives by including sources representing both optimistic and skeptical positions on the democratizing potential of citizen journalism and homeless media, avoiding the tendency to select only literature that confirmed the researcher's initial arguments. Third, although not employing a systematic search protocol as rigorous as a systematic review, the literature search was conducted consistently across five academic databases and one national repository, using predetermined keyword combinations, to ensure adequate coverage across disciplines.

The literature search was conducted through several major academic databases, including Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus, ScienceDirect, and ProQuest. Additionally, a



search was conducted in national repositories such as Garuda (Garba Rujukan Digital) for relevant Indonesian-language sources. Keywords used in the search included citizen journalism, homeless media, alternative media, participatory journalism, digital media participation, non-formal media, community media, and combinations thereof. The use of this cross-language keyword combination was intended to capture relevant literature from both international research traditions and the Indonesian academic context.

The publication period used as a reference was 2001 to 2024, considering that the most significant dynamics of citizen journalism developed during this timeframe. However, the theoretical foundational literature was not limited to this timeframe. Inclusion criteria applied included articles published between 2014 and 2024, discussing the role of digital and social media, focusing on citizen journalism, and available in Indonesian or English. Conversely, exclusion criteria were applied to articles without peer review or articles that were non-scientific opinion pieces, as well as articles that were not relevant to community media or homeless media. A summary of these criteria is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Literature Selection

Category	Criteria
Inclusion	Articles published between 2014–2024
Inclusion	Discussing the role of digital media and social media
Inclusion	Focus on citizen journalism
Inclusion	Available in Indonesian or English
Exclusion	Articles without a peer-review process or are of an unscientific opinion nature
Exclusion	Topics not relevant to community media or homeless media

Source: Processed by researchers (2026)

Based on these criteria, from a total of 187 sources found in the initial search, 35 of the most relevant and representative sources were selected for in-depth analysis in this study. The analysis was conducted in three stages. The first stage is description, where each source is mapped based on its main topic, method used, geographic context, and key findings. This stage aims to obtain a comprehensive overview of the available literature before moving on to a more in-depth interpretation stage. The second stage is interpretation, where the researcher identifies recurring themes, conceptual debates, and developmental patterns in the literature. In this stage, the researcher pays particular attention to points of intersection and tension between citizen journalism studies and homeless media studies, given that the two traditions have tended to develop separately. The third stage is synthesis, where findings from various sources are integrated to construct a coherent narrative about the relationship between citizen journalism and homeless media, while also formulating the conceptual and practical implications of this relationship for the contemporary digital media ecosystem.

Results and Discussion

The discussion that follows does not merely catalogue findings from the reviewed literature. Each subsection is organized to first establish what the literature converges on, then



to identify tensions, silences, or contested claims within that convergence, and finally to interpret what these tensions mean for how citizen journalism and homeless media should be conceptually related. This analytical structure is intended to move the discussion beyond description toward interpretation, consistent with the synthesis stage of the NLR method outlined above.

Evolution of Citizen Journalism

A synthesis of the reviewed literature reveals that the development of citizen journalism has occurred in at least three conceptually distinguishable historical phases. The first phase, from approximately 1995 to 2004, was marked by the emergence of blogs and personal websites as a medium for expression and reporting. During this phase, citizen participation in information production remained sporadic and individual-centered, with a relatively limited audience reach compared to subsequent phases.

The second phase, from 2004 to 2012, saw the proliferation of dedicated citizen journalism platforms and the integration of citizen content into mainstream media. Major events such as the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, the 2005 London attacks, and the Arab Spring from 2010 to 2012 served as catalysts demonstrating citizen journalism's capacity to cover major events in real time. Allan and Thorsen (2009) documented how images and reports from ordinary citizens became the primary source for international media coverage of these events, confirming that citizen contributions were no longer marginal but had become an integral part of the mainstream media news production pipeline.

The third phase, from 2012 to the present, is marked by the maturation of the citizen journalism ecosystem, with the emergence of structured platforms, diverse business models, and a blurring of the boundaries between professional and amateur journalists. Rosen (2006) anticipated this shift, arguing that those formerly known as audiences now possess the tools and capacity to move beyond being passive recipients of information. This development has not been without challenges. Carpenter (2010) found that while citizen journalism increased the diversity of information sources, the quality of verification and accuracy of citizen reports consistently fell below professional journalistic standards. These findings demonstrate that democratizing access to the means of information production does not necessarily result in a democratization of information quality.

Characteristics and Typology of Homeless Media

Literature analysis shows that contemporary homeless media has more complex characteristics than simply being homeless. Kenix (2011) identified that alternative media consistently exhibit substantial differences from mainstream media in terms of issue priorities, narrative framing, and production processes. These differences are not merely technical but also reflect differing value orientations between alternative and mainstream media in viewing the role of journalism in the public sphere.



In the Indonesian context, the phenomenon of homeless media is growing rapidly in line with the growth of internet and social media users. We Are Social (2024) notes that Indonesia has over 185 million active internet users, with a high level of social media penetration among the population. This situation creates fertile ground for various forms of homeless media, ranging from hyperlocal social media-based news portals and YouTube channels of independent citizen journalists to investigative podcasts run by individuals or small groups.

The main characteristics of homeless media identified from the literature synthesis encompass four dimensions. The first dimension is structural, namely that homeless media lacks a formal legal entity, a standard editorial structure, or clear ownership. The second dimension is the economic dimension, where the sustainability model relies on community patronage, not institutional advertising or venture capital. The third dimension is the editorial dimension, where the news agenda is determined by community interests, not by pressure from advertisers or financiers. The fourth dimension is the technological dimension, namely the use of flexible and mobile platforms, dependent on the dynamics of platform policies and audience availability.

The Relationship between Citizen Journalism and Homeless Media

One of the most significant findings from this literature review is that the relationship between citizen journalism and homeless media is reciprocal and mutually reinforcing. On the one hand, citizen journalism provides the human resources that form the foundation for the sustainability of homeless media. On the other hand, the growth of homeless media creates a distribution infrastructure that allows citizen journalism content to reach a wider audience, so that the two phenomena actually grow in a mutually supportive relationship.

It should be noted, however, that this reciprocity is inferred from the pattern observed across separate studies rather than demonstrated within a single empirical study. The causal direction — whether a citizen-journalism culture precedes and enables homeless-media formation, or whether homeless-media platforms first create the space in which citizen-journalism practice can mature remains an open empirical question that this narrative synthesis cannot resolve. The relationship is therefore best described, on the current evidence, as complementary rather than strictly symbiotic in the biological sense the term implies.

Jurrah (2011), in his study of the impact of citizen journalism in developing countries, found that homeless media often emerges in response to the failure of mainstream media to cover issues relevant to local communities. This situation is particularly relevant in the Indonesian context, where the concentration of media ownership in the hands of a group of conglomerates has created blind spots in national media coverage, thus opening up space for the growth of homeless media as an alternative source of information for neglected communities.

Furthermore, the literature synthesis reveals that this phenomenon has a significant democratizing dimension. Atton (2002) argues that alternative media has the potential to redistribute communication power from institutions to individuals and communities. This



potential, while not always fully realized, is a crucial aspect that distinguishes homeless media from mere viral content or rumors circulating on social media. However, this relationship also carries significant tensions. Hermida (2012) warns that an information ecosystem dominated by amateur producers is vulnerable to misinformation and disinformation. In the context of homeless media, this risk is exacerbated by the absence of clear accountability mechanisms and the lack of resources to conduct adequate verification.

The Dimension of Democratization and Critique of Technological Optimism

This study found that discourse surrounding citizen journalism and homeless media is often polarized between technological optimism and critical skepticism. Optimists, represented by Gillmor (2004) and Jenkins (2006), emphasize the inherent democratizing potential of digital technology and participatory culture. They argue that the increasing accessibility of the means of information production and distribution fundamentally alters power relations within the media ecosystem, giving individuals and small communities greater opportunities to participate in public discourse.

Skeptics, on the other hand, point out that the democratization of technology does not necessarily result in the democratization of content or power. Morozov (2011) warns of the dangers of cyber-utopianism, the tendency to overestimate the transformative capacity of digital technology while ignoring the social, economic, and political structures that continue to limit real participation. In the context of homeless media, this is reflected in the fact that while technical barriers to producing and distributing content are decreasing, the economic and social barriers to producing quality journalism remain significant. The synthesis of these two perspectives yields a more nuanced understanding: that citizen journalism and homeless media do have real democratizing potential, but this potential is not automatic. Its realization depends on complex contextual conditions, including equitable digital infrastructure, strong media literacy, a legal ecosystem that protects press freedom, and an active and critical citizen culture.

Implications for the Media Industry and Regulation

The development of citizen journalism and homeless media has significant implications for the conventional media industry and communications policy. From an industry perspective, the growth of homeless media has intensified competition for audience attention, the most scarce resource in an era of abundant information. Mainstream media have responded by integrating elements of citizen journalism into their production models, from the use of user-generated content to the development of hyperlocal journalism platforms, in an effort to remain relevant amid changing public information consumption patterns.

From a regulatory perspective, the growth of homeless media raises questions that remain inadequately answered, including whether homeless media have the same rights and responsibilities as mainstream media, and how press regulation can protect freedom of expression while preventing the spread of disinformation from unaccountable sources. The core of this regulatory dilemma can be framed as a choice between two competing models.



A liability-based model would hold homeless-media producers accountable after the fact for the content they publish, mirroring the approach several jurisdictions have taken toward algorithmic disinformation on social media platforms (Sun, 2023); this model protects the public from harm but risks discouraging the very grassroots participation that gives homeless media its democratizing value, since individual citizen producers rarely have the legal or financial resources to bear liability in the way institutional publishers do. An enabling model, by contrast, would extend lighter-touch accreditation or self-regulatory mechanisms to homeless-media producers, trading some enforceability for continued participation, but risks leaving verification and accountability gaps unaddressed.

The Indonesian case illustrates why this dilemma is not merely theoretical. Indonesia's existing press-accountability infrastructure built around Law No. 40/1999 on the Press and the self-regulatory role of the Press Council (Dewan Pers) was designed for institutionally anchored media companies with identifiable legal entities and editorial responsibility. Tapsell (2017) shows that even within this formal system, the concentration of media ownership among a small number of conglomerates already shapes which stories reach national attention and which do not; homeless media, precisely because it lacks a legal entity or formal ownership, falls outside the scope of this accountability structure altogether.

This means that the fastest-growing segment of Indonesia's information ecosystem currently operates with the least institutional oversight, a mismatch that existing press law was not designed to address and that platform-level content moderation only partially fills. Answering these questions requires a contextual and adaptive regulatory approach that takes into account the unique characteristics of the homeless media ecosystem for instance, tiered accountability requirements proportional to audience reach, or platform-level verification badges for community-run news channels without stifling the spirit of participation that underpins its strength.

Conclusion

This narrative literature review set out to address four aims and each is answered here in turn. First, on the conceptualization of citizen journalism (Aim 1): the review shows that citizen journalism has evolved from a mere technological phenomenon into a complex social practice, with an ecosystem encompassing various actors, platforms, and engagement models, evolving through three historical phases from the era of individual blogs to a structured participatory journalism ecosystem.

Second, on the development of homeless media as an informal media ecosystem (Aim 2): homeless media represents the contemporary evolution of a long tradition of alternative and community media. Structurally, it is defined by the absence of a stable institutional home rather than by a necessarily oppositional political stance, which distinguishes it from, while also partially overlapping with, Atton's (2002) narrower concept of alternative media. Its non-institutional, community-based, and issue-oriented characteristics make it an important counterweight in a media ecosystem dominated by institutional and corporate interests.



Third, on the relationship between citizen participation and the growth of homeless media (Aim 3): the relationship is complementary citizen journalism supplies the human resources and culture of participation that enable homeless media to thrive, while homeless media provides the distribution infrastructure and community legitimacy for citizen-journalism practices — though, as discussed above, the direction of causality between the two remains an open empirical question rather than a settled finding.

Fourth, on the significance of this phenomenon for the democratization of information (Aim 4): this complementary relationship is a key mechanism in the process of democratizing information in the digital era, but its democratizing potential is real without being automatic, since realization depends on contextual conditions that include digital infrastructure, media literacy, the legal ecosystem, and an active citizen culture. The regulatory analysis above further shows that this potential is currently constrained by an accountability gap: existing press regulation, in Indonesia and elsewhere, was not designed for media entities that lack a legal or institutional home.

Based on these findings, this article proposes several future research agendas: more specific empirical research on the homeless media ecosystem in Indonesia, including mapping its types, sustainability models, and impact on the quality of public discourse; comparative studies across various national contexts to enrich understanding of the factors that support or hinder the development of homeless media; research on citizen media literacy as a condition that enables meaningful participation in citizen journalism and homeless media; and, in light of the regulatory gap identified above, empirical research on tiered or platform-level accountability mechanisms specifically designed for institutionally homeless media producers.

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