Understanding Public Sphere:  
The Views and Contribution of the Stakeholders  
of Local Film Festival in Indonesia

Abstract
The tremendous growth of film festivals is one of the prominent features of post-New Order Indonesian cinema. Among the many festivals, is Festival Film Purbalingga, an annual local film festival, held in Purbalingga, a remote city in Central Java. The festival initiated in 2007 by Cinema Lovers Community (CLC), a local film community to provide an exhibition channel for local films, brought about by the lack of opportunities for film system in the area. The festival challenges Indonesian film festivals in terms of management, audience, program, films, filmmakers, and stakeholders. Organized by local communities, the festival aims to reach local audience via ‘Layar Tanjleb’ (outdoor film screenings) in rural areas. The films directed by local filmmakers, presented in local narratives and local language, ‘Banyumasan’. The stakeholders are local young people consists of local festival organizers, filmmakers, film distributors, journalists, jury, and academicians. This article argues that the views and the contribution of the festival’s stakeholders foster a sense of community in creating the festival as a public sphere. This article is based on a single case study conducted by a focus group discussion, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The findings will be situated in the scholarship on film festivals in Indonesia and global context.

Keywords:  
Film, Film Festival; local, stakeholders; public sphere; Indonesia, post-New Order Indonesia

INTRODUCTION
Since the fall of Suharto in 1998, and the consequent end of the New Order period with its attendant social and cultural restrictions, there has been a significant increase in the number of film festivals in Indonesia. The festivals
have emerged in large and small cities all around Indonesia. Although Lulu Ratna (2010) mentions ten influential film festivals in the period from 1998 to 2010, it can be predicted that in fact there are dozens of film festivals held across Indonesia including those that are relatively newly established. The emergence of these festivals challenges the domination of Festival Film Indonesia (Indonesian Film Festival), the only annual festival held by the government for a national audience since 1973 (Ardan 2004; Mediarta 2007; Ratna 2010). The government factor in organizing and managing this festival placed it as the predominant mainstream film festival in Indonesia. Therefore, a great variety of film festivals since 1999, mostly organized and managed by film communities, are positioned as independent film festivals as there is no government involvement. The festivals include: Festival Film-Video Independen Indonesia (Indonesian Independent Film-Video Festival), later renamed as Festival Film Pendek Konfiden (Konfiden Short Film Festival); Jakarta International Film Festival; Festival Film Dokumenter (Documentary Film Festival); Jogja-Netpac Asean Film Festival; V International Women’s Film Festival; Festival Film Bandung; and Festival Film Solo. These independent film festivals are not only targeted towards a national audience but also regional, international and local audiences.

One of the influential Indonesian local film festivals is Festival Film Purbalingga (Purbalingga Film Festival). This annual festival was established in 2007 by local film communities in Purbalingga, a remote city about six hours drive from Semarang, the Capital of Central Java with population less
than one million, consisting mostly of rice farmers and factory workers. Purbalingga Film Festival screens local short films made in Purbalingga and directed by high school students in the Banyumas Area, a local district in Central Java which consists of small cities such as Purbalingga, Purwokerto, Cilacap, Banyumas, and Banjarnegara. Uniquely, the films screened in the festivals are made in Banyumasan Language, a local language spoken in the Banyumas Area. As such, the festival is the first festival in Indonesia which screens films in a local language. Because the films are now also distributed nationally and internationally in several other festivals, Indonesian or English subtitles are utilised accordingly.

Festival Film Purbalingga is one of the festivals born in post-New Order Indonesia which maintains sustainability and develops upon its program along with its audience numbers year by year. Other film festivals such as Festival Film Solo, and V International Women’s Festival ran for only two years due to the lack of funding and issues of mismanagement. The reason why Festival Film Purbalingga survives year by year is that the festival is able to penetrate the broader independent film network not only in Purbalingga but also in several nearby cities including Purwokerto, Cilacap, and Banjarnegara (Ratna; 2010). In addition, the festival was born from the local communities’ needs to produce, distribute and exhibit films as a form of cultural expression is developing because of the commitment of the community as the festivals’ stakeholders.
Thus, this article argues that the subjectivity and the views of the stakeholders of Festival Film Purbalingga towards their contribution to the festival bring them to have a sense of community in creating the festival as a public sphere. This main thesis is followed by several questions to be answered in the research findings: What is the role of Festival Film Purbalingga? How do the festival stakeholders feel about being part the festival community? How is local identity defined by the stakeholders? What is the meaning of ‘festival as a public sphere’ according to them? The answers to these questions will be situated both in the dynamic of film festivals in Indonesia as well as in an international context.

THE METHOD

The present study adopts a qualitative approach that relies on case study as method. A case study research, according Robert K. Yin (1994), is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.” This method is assumed as an accurate method in answering the questions of why and or how.

This research applies a single case study, being the Purbalingga Film Festival, held in May 2015. However, as the focus of the research is the views held by festival stakeholders in relation to the concept of public sphere, the
research employs several data gathering techniques: focus group discussion, in-depth interviews, and document analysis.

Focus group discussion (FGD) is used to give opportunity to the researcher to develop rapport with the stakeholders of the festival as the participants of the discussion. It is important to understand the participants’ perception, attitude, and experience (Yusuf 2008). For the purpose of this study, a FGD was conducted in May 2015 to examine the dynamic among the festival stakeholders in relation to their views about the festival and their contribution. Participant selection was determined by the author based on information gathered through fieldwork undertaken before and during the festival. Fifteen participants were involved in the discussion consisting of: local community members, festival organizers, filmmakers, film distributors, jury members, youth organizations, journalists, high school teachers, local villagers, audience members, and representatives of local governments.

In-depth interview is a type of informal interview where the questions are open and the interview is conducted in a spontaneous and flexible way (Patton, 2006). The aim of the interviews was to get to know the interviewees (informants) and to probe their knowledge of the realities. There were eight informants interviewed: the founder of the festival, the director of the festival, food seller (local community member), youth from the local community, and four members of local film communities.

The focus group discussion and interviews were conducted in Indonesian language mixed with Javanese and Banyumas as local languages.
Later, the interviews were translated into English for the purpose of writing this article.

Besides these two techniques, the study utilizes document analysis of print media coverage about the festival, particularly in gathering information about the festival in previous years.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

There are two relevant conceptual frameworks used in this present study. Firstly, the film festival as a burgeoning study in the scholarship of film studies both in global and Indonesian contexts. Secondly, the film festival as a public sphere where the festivals stakeholders negotiate their interest with the aim of the festival.

Theorizing Film Festivals: From Global to Indonesia

There has been an exponential rise of film festivals over the past decade likened to Starbucks franchises (Peranson 2009) and “mushrooms after a good rain” (Quintin 2009, 41). International Federation of Film Producers Associations estimates that there are 700 film festivals worldwide in 2009. In addition, The New York Times, a newspaper in the U.S.A., presumes the existence of over 1,000 film festivals in 2009 (Cousins 2009).
Film festivals have become the focus of increasingly significant studies for film scholars (Archibald & Miller 2011). It was Bill Nichols (1994) who starts an academic study about film festival by arguing that film festivals are not just an auxiliary to other activities but a phenomenon in their own right as they have their own economies; social and economic drivers; professional and political dynamics; and agendas.

Following Nichols, a media anthropologist, Daniel Dayan (2000) who wrote on the Sundance film festival, looks at the existence of film festivals as a set of divergent performances by festival film’s stakeholders – such as filmmakers, film distributors, festival organizers, journalists and audience - who have diverse interests. These stakeholders contribute in defining the existence of a film festival that is mostly answering questions about self-definition, identity and character.

Since that time, there have been and increasing number of studies on film festivals. Some of these studies discuss film festivals as institutions (Stringer 2003); the diverse of film festival phenomenon (Turin 2002 & de Valck 2007); and spatial and temporal dimensions of the film festival (Elsaesser 2005 and Harbord 2002).

Among these individual works, Marijke de Valck’s Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia, published in 2008, is the first-single author book focusing on film festivals in a systematic and academic study. De Valck (2007) conducts case studies of international film festivals (Berlin, Cannes, Venice and Rotterdam) to understand the festival
circuit as a network in an interdisciplinary socio-economics tradition of the field of cultural theory and media studies. Besides her published works, Marijke de Valck also collaborates with Skadi Loist in establishing the Film Festival Research Network (FFRN) as an online, annotated, thematic and regular bibliography of film festival research (www.filmfestivalresearch.org).

In Indonesia there are limited studies about film festivals. Some of these studies are about the promotion of short films in a film festival (Mediarta 2007); the festivals strategy in Q! (Queer) Film Festival (Maimunah 2008), the films screened in a documentary film festival (Irawanto & Kurnia 2008), the film festival as a place for public appreciation of national films (Kurnia, 2008), variety and characters of Indonesian film festivals (Ratna 2010), the role of film festival (Kusuma 2011) and the experience of joining the jury in film festivals (Irawanto 2011). Beside these studies, there is newer research on the relationship between government and civil society in organizing film festivals (Aryanto 2015), the management of independent film festivals in Yogyakarta (Aryanto 2014), and the organization of Asian independent film festivals based on the power of community (Habibi 2012). Among them, only Ratna’s and Mediarta’s articles are listed on Film Festival Research Network (FFRN), an online bibliography about works on film festivals.

From these studies, it is clear that documentation and analysis of the explosion of film festivals in the post-New Order period remains limited in the international literature on film festivals. Therefore, study about Festival Film Purbalingga, dealing especially with the stakeholders’ views on the festival as
public sphere, is needed to fill the gap in scholarship of local independent film festivals.

**Film Festivals as Public Sphere: From Local to International**

As previously explained, film festivals attract not only international but also Indonesian scholars as sites of studies about film and people. According to a festival film scholar, Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong (2011), film festivals offer a place in which multiple agents meet to negotiate their interests on local, national and supranational relations “culture, power, and identity”. Another film festival scholar, Daniel Dayan (2000, 45) explains that the relationship between people and festival lies on the assumption that the film festival is a way for the festival stakeholders to answer questions about how they define themselves, their identity and their character. Dayan states that:

In a way, a film festival is mostly spent answering questions about self-definition, identity and character. This definitional activity is on the minds of all involved: organizers, jury members, candidates, audiences, buyers and storytellers of different sorts, those who write catalogues, those who write reviews, those who script buzz, and those who write wrap-up essays.

(Dayan 2000, 45)

From this explanation it can be seen that with every film festival, there are variety of stakeholders. They are the people who produce the films, distribute the films, organize the films, produce media and news content about the
festival, watch the films screened in the festival, and other stakeholders which have their own interests. These stakeholders create the crowd that becomes a new community based around the festival.

In the process of creating a new community, film festivals play a role in facilitating a new public sphere. Borrowing from the concept of public sphere offered by Jurgen Habermas, film festivals have cultural and social meaning for the stakeholders and the wider society. For Habermas, public sphere is defined as:

A realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body…Citizens behave as public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion…about matters of general interest. (Habermas1974, 49).

In redefining Habermas’ public sphere into media and communication studies, Peter Lunt and Sonia Livingstone (2013, 95) emphasize the importance of inclusivity, diversity, identity, the end of consensus government, distributed governance, and the complexity of social systems as important elements of creating public sphere.

The concept of public sphere is also applied in studies about film festivals as conducted by Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong (2011, 163) who sees the existence of the film festival to create a public sphere explained as follows:
Festival films provide/transform public space, again echoing the experience of more literary public spheres. In festivals, people can discuss political, social, and cultural ideas through the medium of cinema as well as engage in conversation about the nature of the medium itself. Indeed, the physicality of many festivals as they take over public venues and spill over into lobbies, streets, and coffee houses, evokes the vivid spatialities of Habermas’ first examples of the bourgeois. (Wong 2011, 163)

According to Wong, Habermas sees the public sphere as a special site for the involvement of civil society that is inclusive although there is debate about the exclusivity of film festival in relation to gender and class (Wong 2011). In this sense, Wong Explains that although the festival aims to be open for any gender, the existence of women in the festivals tend to be limited in comparison to men excluding the womens film festivals. Nevertheless, Wong argues that every festival has variety in terms of scope, goals, constituents and the festival content, and therefore the relationship between the film festival and public sphere will depend on the festival’s program, spirit and the organization context.

The work of Salma Monany (2013) shows that environmental film festivals in several countries in the world (for example: the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, Japan, Russia) function as a public sphere based on the reasoning that these film festivals often present themselves as meeting spaces for expanding the spheres of democratic and public engagement. Drawing on Julian Stringers’ work on film festival as public spheres, Monany (2013) explains that thematic film festivals like
environmental film festivals often have a dual role both as the official public sphere and the alternative public spheres:

The official public sphere suggests that everyone unhampered by and outside of state position has a legitimate say in a political dialogue about ‘the management of civil life’. However, as various critics argue, such a sphere is power-stratified, thus, by contrast, the alternative public sphere, first conceived by theorist Nancy Fraser, offers minority groups (for example, feminist, gay, or queer communities) spaces for parallel democratic and participatory engagement in ways that enable them to ‘withdraw and regroup; as well as generate the grounds for ‘agitational activities directed towards wider publics.” (Monany 2013, 257)

In other words, Monany argues that thematic film festivals encourage both a general audience and a specialized audience.

In the Indonesian context, a study done by Novi Kurnia (2008) shows that film festivals reside in the relationship between the State and the society where the festival plays role as a form of audience’s appreciation for national films. Based on historical context in the New Order where the festivals were dominated by the government or the State, there is an urgency for the State to facilitate the organization of independent film festivals in stimulating social empowerment in appreciating Indonesian film and creating a more democratic film atmosphere in post-New Order (Kurnia 2008). The organization of these independent festivals that are based on film or other communities is a form of public sphere that enable the communities to participate actively in the landscape of Indonesian cinema. This public sphere should be free from the
intervention of the State as well as the hegemonic film market dominated by Hollywood. The emergence of these festivals and its public sphere thus is aimed to broaden the experience of both filmmakers and audience to be film literate.

**RESEARCH FINDINGS**

Based on the questions addressed to the festival stakeholders explained in the introduction, this section deals with major themes of research findings: the role of Festival Film Purbalingga, the sense of belonging of the festival’s stakeholders, the perception of local identity in relation to the festival, and the meaning of the festival as a public sphere.

**In the absence of a cinematic system: the ‘virus’ of producing and consuming film**

The emergence of numerous film festivals in post-New Order Indonesia is a phenomenon that decisively overturned the situation from the previous era when there was only one film festival, Festival Film Indonesia. This phenomenon is reflective of the socio-political context of post-New Order Indonesia under the current political system of regional autonomy. The festivals, of course, contribute to the promotion of local and regional identity in the dynamic of national cinema. In addition, according to festival film
organizer Lulu Ratna (2010), these local film festivals play a significant role ‘in introducing and connecting filmmakers to the grassroots audience’.

In this landscape, Festival Film Purbalingga was launched in 2007. It was Bowo Leksono, the festival founder, an ex-journalist who shared his experience in filmmaking with Purbalingga youth community by using his own funds to implement filmmaking workshops in several high schools in Purbalingga in 2005. His work then prompted other local filmmakers to establish the Cinema Lovers Community (CLC) that has a specific goal: to make as many independent local (Purbalingga) films as possible (B. Leksono, personal communication, May 2, 2015). A year later, CLC created an event called Bioskop Kita (Our Cinema) to screen films produced by high school students in 2006. The program has been well received by the local community. Leksono (as quoted in Nugroho, 2010) states that, “People who had become bored with mainstream films came to watch the movies played in Graha Adiguna in the Regency Government Building”. Unfortunately the program only ran for about two months because the Purbalingga Regency Administration stopped the screening based on the reason that the building is not aimed for film screening (Leksono 2014). In order to create a similar program of local film screening, CLC initiated the local film festival, Purbalingga Film Festival, in 2007.

Purbalingga Film Festival has run every year since 2007. There are several main programs such as competitions and film screenings for high school students in the area of Banyumas, non-competition film screenings,
of film screening events for film communities, arts performance and the festival awards nights. The festival itself runs for approximately one month each year. Among the programs, the most unique program is ‘Layar Tanjleb’, outdoor film screenings. The term ‘Layar Tanjleb’ is a local variant of ‘Layar Tancap’ to describe the method of film screening held in outdoor areas which in Katinka Van Heeren’s opinion is classed as mobile cinema (Van Heeren 2012). In the New Order period, these outdoor film screenings were viewed as being lower-class and rural entertainment. However, in the case of Festival Film Purbalingga, the choice of employing outdoor film screenings in order to reach a wider audience of the local residents in Banyumas area which is hilly so that come the them is the best choice to attract them watching local films. In 2015, ‘Layar Tanjleb’ events were held in nineteen villages in Purbalingga, Banyumas, Cilacap and Banjarnegara. According to one of the organizers of the festival, Cahyo Prihantoro (personal communication, May 30, 2015), the festival offers the new culture of film consumption: budaya layar tancap (the culture of outdoor film screening) which is provides access to films for the marginalized people in the villages with no existing infrastructure for film screening.

What is interesting about the festival is that it has played a role in becoming a distribution and exhibition channel for local film production as well as in motivating youth to produce local films. Nanki Nirmanto, manager of the Cinema Lovers Community, states that the aim of festival is not only
targeted at the youth in Purbalingga but also in the broader Banyumas area (N. Nirmanto, personal communication, May 30, 2015). This aim is achieved as confirmed by Insan Indah Pribadi, a filmmaker and film distributor from Sangkanparan film community in Cilacap, a city near Purbalingga. Pribadi explains that the festival is “disengkuyung” (Javanese expression for being supported) by local filmmakers from four cities in the Banyumas area: Purbalingga, Cilacap, Banyumas, and Banjarnegara. Their motivation is that they want to be involved in the festival by producing films about local issues using local language (I. I. Pribadi, personal communication, May 30, 2015).

As the film production and film screening is now not only taking place in Purbalingga but also in other surrounding cities, Pribadi (personal communication, May 30, 2015) states, that the “virus” of filmmaking has spread to other cities in Banyumas. In other words, the passion for producing local film is not only circulating amongst local filmmakers in Purbalingga but also those who live in the surrounds. Thus, the passion for consuming these local films has also spread to not only the filmmakers but also to the broader community residing in villages in the Banyumas Area.

“The festival community”: From high school students to the villagers

In the nine years that Festival Film Purbalingga has been held, the festival community continuous to strengthen the sense belonging amongst its stakeholders.
The persistent and hard work year after year by the organizers, who are also members of Cinema Lovers Community (CLC), has paid off. Nanki Nirmanto, manager of the festival and filmmaker whose film was presented in the festival, explains that managing a one month long festival in 2015 is not that difficult as they already have existing networks in the Banyumas area and beyond (N. Nirmanto, personal communication, May 30, 2015). These networks consist of filmmakers as well as young villagers from the Banyumas area. These young people are ready to support the festival in organizing the programs. For example, Reza Haryanto, organizer and member of CLC, expresses his feelings about being one of the organizers: “over the years I have been involved in the festival, I feel like I have gained a new family, new friends, new best friends with other organizers as well as the filmmakers.” Similarly, Cahyo Prihantoro join since 2011 feels that the festival is friendly and new home (R. Haryanto, personal communication, May 30, 2015).

Local filmmakers, particularly those who are high school students, are strongly involved in the festival. Nugraha Budi Santosa, a filmmaker from a senior high school in Bukateja village in Purbalingga, says that his experience in filmmaking is not only useful in developing his skills and talent but also to establish networks with other filmmakers in the Banyumas area (N. B. Santosa, personal communication, May 30, 2015). A younger filmmaker, Eko Junianto, from a junior high school in Karangmoncol, Purbalingga, argues that by producing films he feels he has the opportunity to understand society better. Junianto who won several awards including prize money for his films
chooses to donate the money to his school to buy equipment for film production. Junianto who travel to other cities in Indonesia such as Jakarta, Solo, and Yogya states that the strength of his films as well other Purbalingga films is that they tell a story that is about something real in society (E. Junianto, personal communication, May 30, 2015).

The enthusiasm of these students is also felt by Giyarti, a high school teacher in Kemangkon village in Purbalingga. Giyarti (personal communication, May 30, 2015) facilitates her students to produce films as school projects which she believes is an interesting and engaging activity. She mentions that the nominations received by her students submitting films has benefitted the schools image in the community which is expected to have a positive impact on future enrollments. As a result, the headmaster is supportive of the students producing films and being involved in the festival annually.

Meanwhile, for young villager, Bangkit Wismo, who is also an activist with Karang Taruna (village youth organization) in Wirabumi, Purbalingga, young villagers are highly motivated to be part of the festival. He claims that the young villagers in his area are willing to join with the festival to organize Layar Tanjileb in their village annually. Their motivation comes from positive audience response in these areas with local communities expressing a strong desire to see films about local issues presented in local language (B. Wismo, personal communication, May 30, 2015). Similar reasons are also given by Sugito, a village chief in Serang, Purbalingga. Sugito (personal
communication, May 30, 2015) states that the villagers love the local films screened by the festival. They love gathering in an open area to meet with other villagers with a common interest: to consume local films.

Nugroho Pandhu Sukmono is a journalist with the biggest daily newspaper in Central Java, *Suara Merdeka*. He has written about Festival Film Purbalingga each year for the last four years. He also consistently writes about Purbalingga films even when the festival is not running. He says the festival is ‘a never-ending news story’. The reason is because the festival and film production in Purbalingga is not only interesting but it is also produced year round so that there is always something new about it. Inspired by the festival, in addition his work as a journalist, Sukmono established a video competition called *Kompetisi Video Kampung* in 2015. This competition featured sixteen videos, mostly about local tourism, produced by villagers in the Banyumas area (N.P Sukmono, personal communication, May 30, 2015).

For jury member for the festival, Imam Hamidi Antassalam (personal communication, May 30, 2015, his experiences in becoming a jury member made him realize the importance of the films screened for the festival. These films dealt with social issues which are found in daily life. Similarly, a devoted audience member for the festival, Subagyo (personal communication, May 30, 2015), states that the power of the festival lies in the screening of films that are accessible and relevant to the audience.

From the views of stakeholders above, it seems that the festival has succeeded in creating a solid festival community consisting of organizers, jury
members, filmmakers, local residents, journalists and audiences. Local
government appears to be unrepresented in the growth of the festival
community. A local government officer, Subeno (personal communication,
May 30, 2015) stated that he as the representative of government, rather than a
researcher from another city, should be the one to facilitate a discussion to
gather information about festival stakeholders views in order to inform the
future direction of the festival. From his statement, it seems that there is a
tension between local government and the festival organizers which is a proof
that the festival is independent from government’s intervention.

**Being Banyumas, being national, being global?**

The most intriguing finding of this study is the awareness of the stakeholders
of Festival Film Purbalingga about their local identity of ‘being Banyumas’ as
demonstrated by the geographical area, language, and the issues represented in
the films.

Being Banyumas as a geographical area means that the stakeholders are
citizens who live in the Banyumas area mostly in Purbalingga, Banjarnegara,
Cilacap, and Banyumas. These people feel the need to produce and consume
films as a cultural product in areas with no film screening infrastructure
provided by the government. Setiawati (2013) says that “the absence of a
cinema network is a cue for creativity”. Festival Film Purbalingga has an
important role to unite these people by providing a channel of exhibition
where the youth in the area can enjoy the local independent films as well as motivating them to produce the films.

Being Banyumas is characterized by Banyumas language called “Bahasa Ngapak” which has characteristics and a style of speech different to other Javanese languages. For some people, this accent sounds funny and ‘kampungan’ (rural and unsophisticated). A Jury member, Imam Hamidi Antassalam (personal communication, May 30, 2015) states that the important character of film in Purbalingga or other cities in Banyumas is the language as it creates a site of culture and a view about the world. In similar sense, a local filmmaker and distributor from Cilacap, Insan Indah Pribadi sees that after almost a decade of producing and screening films in the area, the image of “bahasa Ngapak” has gone from ‘kampungan’ (rural) to keren (cool), as the audience has become broader as a result of successful screenings in areas beyond Banyumas (I. I. Pribadi, personal communication, May 30, 2015).

Being Banyumas is also defined by the local issues discussed in the films. According to Imam Hamidi Antassalam, jury member for the festival, the majority of the films are about local issues (I. H. Antassalam, personal communication, May 30, 2015). Similarly, Bangkit Wismo (personal communication, May 30, 2015, youth activist, states that the films are relevant to the audience because of the language used and the issue which reflect daily life. In addition, Subagyo (personal communication, May 30, 2015), an audience member, states that most of films are set in the village and represent daily life for Banyumas people who live in small rural cities.
Although Festival Film Purbalingga is characterized by its local identity, Nugroho Pandhu Sukmono, journalist, believes that the winning films of Festival Film Purbalingga have proven to be of better quality than many other local films in Indonesia. Many of them have also won awards in other local film festivals such as those in Solo, Denpasar, Surabaya and Malang. According to Sukmono, Purbalingga films sound ‘sexy’ compared to other local films because the use of local language becomes a point of interest. Although most of films produced in Banyumas area are similar in the employment language and social issues as dominant themes, Purbalingga films, compared to films from other cities such as Cilacap, Banyumas and Banjarnegara, are more consistent, not only in terms of production but also in screening (N. P. Sukmono, personal communication, May 30, 2015).

From this explanation, it seems that both the festival and its films are significant at a national level. Dimas Jayasrana (personal communication, May 2, 2015) states that the importance of the festival, as well as the films, lies within its political identity, and its localism. The question for the future is how localism as the key political identity of festival will translate globally in next decade.

Creative and independent: the creating of public sphere

To understand the role of Festival Film Purbalingga in creating a public sphere, this section will discuss features such as the importance of inclusivity,
diversity, and identity; the demise of consensus government; distributed governance; and the complexity of social systems which are categories define by Lunt & Livingstone (2013).

Involving as many stakeholders as possible, as explained in the previous section demonstrates the importance of inclusivity in that the festival is open to all interested parties. In my observation, the festival attracts not only local stakeholders but also national and international stakeholders as audiences, researchers, and journalists.

As the festival becomes more open, then the diversity of the stakeholders is more profound. This diversity is also found in the themes represented in the films screened in the festival, dealing primarily with contemporary social issues which vary year to year.

The most prominent feature of the festival, as well as its films, is the illustration of political identity which emphasizes the localism of Banyumas. Such identities are shown in the geographical background of the filmmakers, the language, and the local issues of the films. Such persistent identities are reinforced year by year to negotiate with the dominant identity of Indonesian cinema which has previously been hegemonized by films produced by and about urban people, mostly in Jakarta which is the capital city and the centre of film production.

The fact that Festival Film Purbalingga is free from the intervention of local government was shown in the focus group discussion held for this study. One local government officer from the department of education Tri Gunawan
Setiadi (personal communication, May 30, 2015) states clearly that “the role of local government for the festival is zero.” In agreement with Setiadi, another local government officer who has just been promoted to deal with culture and tourism, Subeno, claims that the government sees the festivals organizers as local assets in activities related to cultural production and consumption. In the discussion, Subeno (personal communication, May 30, 2015) offers to oversee both the festival organizers and the local film communities. However, there is resistance from the festival organizers to accept the offer as they have a negative history with the local government. Bowo Leksono, founder and director of the festival, states that since the incident of 2006 when the film screenings were cancelled by the local government, he and other local filmmakers decided to be independent and not to depend on the government. The festival was relaunched after the incident to prove that “we are more creative and innovative” (B. Leksono, personal communication, May 30, 2015). For this humble relaunching, a film screening was organized in 2007 by renting a meeting room and the event was known as Parade Film Purbalingga. As the program is not only film screening but also discussion and an awards night, it was renamed Festival Film Purbalingga.

To this day there has been no intervention from local government and Nanki Nirmanto, festival manager, states that the festival is not dependent on commercial sponsorship. There is some sponsorship for the festival but, there are many sponsors. Nirmanto states that it’s not in terms of duit (money)
“...because we would like a partnership-model so that in kind support is more appreciated. For example, when we manage a film screening in a village, we would like young villagers to be the local committee to deal with logistics because the festival organizers have already prepared the film, the screen, the projector as well as the soundsystem” (N. Nirmanto, personal communication, May 30, 2015)

In relation to distributed governance, to facilitate the participation of local villagers in “Layar Tanjleb” the organizers of the festival delegate responsibilities to the villagers. The networking power that has been built over a period of years is integral to organising a month long festival. The effectiveness of the organizer relies on the strong community formed by all stakeholders.

The complexity of social system is manifested in the influence of filmmakers from Purbalingga to spread ‘the virus’ for producing and consuming film as a basic means to address social problems. The festival has contributed to a change in the social system. Bowo Leksono (personal communication, May 30, 2015) states that after nine years of the festival, Festival Film Purbalingga has set the benchmark for films produced by high school students, as many of them not only wins awards in Purbalingga but also in other prestigious festivals in Indonesia. Muhammad Nur Iskandar (personal communication, May 14, 2015) believes that the local potential of Purbalingga people can be elevated through film production. Similarly, Amris ((personal communication, May 24, 2015) argues that the festival provides an opportunity for the youth to do something positive. The festival also positively impacts the local economy. According to Insan Indah Pribadi (personal
communication, May 30, 2015) the Layar Tanjleb events held in almost twenty villages in the Banyumas area brings local spending power into the village. He mentions that the organizers are often asked about the schedule of film screening by the food sellers in the area. One of them, Maryani (personal communication, May 4, 2015), states that, “I am very glad to know that there are film screenings in many villages near my residence because I will have people to by my food.” The festival also contributes to daily politics. Bowo Leksono (personal communication, May 30, 2015) founder and director of the festival, states that in last two or three years Purbalingga films have become more political in terms of criticizing the local government. Nanki Nirmanto (personal communication, May 30, 2015) supports Leksono’s ideas that the films and the festival becomes a social movement to seek solutions from social problems. Dimas Jayasrana (personal communication, May 2, 2015, founder and festival programmer, states that the most important elements for films in the festival are the issues not the aesthetic: “Film as a motor, for knowledge transformation”. Supported Jayasrana’s arguments, Bangkit Wismo, a youth activist, states that the participation of young villagers in Layar Tanjleb is important to empower them to be more film literate. In turn, some of them who at first were asking about “how to make a film” then became more open minded having seen several social issues in the films were motivated to actively produce films themselves (B. Wismo, personal communication, May 30, 2015). Being of open mind, of course, is because the knowledge transformation is succesfully facilitated.
The success story of how the stakeholders of Festival Film Purbalingga contribute to the festival shows that they have a common interest which is to establish a good film system in the Banyumas area. However, the festival still faces challenges both external and internal. External challenges come from the local government which attempts to control the film screenings held by Cinema Lovers Community each year (Leksono 2014). Internal challenges are presented in the issue of funding which is a common problem for film festival organizers in Indonesia. However, Leksono (2014) states that so far Festival Film Purbalingga can manage the funding independently. The festival employs a policy to limit external funding in order to maintain its independence. Another internal challenge is to make the festival attract bigger audiences and maximise local distribution through outdoor film screenings. Leksono (2014) states that he feels strongly that Purbalingga films should be watched by Purbalingga residents so screening times should be scheduled to coincide with audience leisure time. In addition, there are other promotional tools such as doorprizes and vouchers to attract the audience.

It is clearly evidenced in this research that in nine years of operation, Festival Film Purbalingga and its stakeholders have embraced a spirit of independence in creating a unique film system: film production, film distribution and film exhibition. This process of film system is then celebrated in the festival where all the stakeholders work to create the festival as a public sphere. Borrowing on Wong’s explanation about film festival as a public sphere, as explained in the conceptual framework, clearly Festival Film
Purbalingga as a public sphere echoes the experience, the knowledge, and the sense of belonging to the festival as well as community and a place where the stakeholders can discuss political, social, and cultural issues through the medium of film as well as the conversation about the medium itself.

CONCLUSION

Since its inception, Festival Film Purbalingga - much like most film festivals born in the post-New Order Indonesia - endeavored to provide autonomy in organizing the film festival as the channel of film distribution and exhibition. The festival was born as a creative outlet for film communities in Purbalingga as well as the Banyumas area, as there is no existing film system in the area, so that festival not only screens the films but also motivates the youth to produce films about their daily lives. In the landscape of film festivals in post-New Order Indonesia, Purbalingga Film Festival is proof that independent film festivals can manage their own festival without any support from the government or other funding so that their self-determination in voicing opinion about social issues will not be compromised.

As a collaborative work between the festival stakeholders, Festival Film Purbalingga succeeds in creating a public sphere where the stakeholders can negotiate their interests within the objectives of the festival. The festival organizers have the opportunity to develop the festival each year because of
the stakeholders’ willingness to contribute to the festival as a public sphere. The local filmmakers actively produce local films with local narratives based on the social, political, and cultural issues in Purbalingga and Banyumas area. The film distributors distribute local films, not only for Purbalingga Film Festival but also for other film festivals in Indonesia. The youth organizations in the villages where ‘Layar Tanjileb’ held are the ‘motor’ of the festival that organize the logistic elements of the film screenings in almost twenty villages in Purbalingga area. The journalists, from both print media and online media, are involved in reporting the news about the festival, the films and the people. Purbalingga film festival now not only attracts a local audience but also national and international audiences by virtue of the festivals uniqueness. Similarly, the publications about the festival are becoming increasingly widespread and provide analysis of the festival, the program and the stakeholders.

Based on the research findings, this study focuses on only the views from the stakeholders about the existence of Festival Film Purbalingga as a public sphere. Therefore, this study would not be able to provide a contextual analysis of the issue of public sphere in the films screened the festival as well as it would not be able to explore the practice of consumption among the audience of the festival. These two issues would be interesting topics for future research about Festival Film Purbalingga.

Such studies are important to position local film festivals not only in a national context but also in an international context as there is now growing
interest in film festivals from all around the world. The case of Festival Film Purbalingga in relation to its ability to create a public sphere by placing emphasis on it localism and its sustainability is an example of how a local festival can be independent and play an important role in motivating the youth to produce, distribute, exhibit, and consume local films with pride.

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