



MASYARAKAT KEBUDAYAAN DAN POLITIK

Media Massa, Demokratisasi dan Etika Sosial

**Audience, Viewing Practice and Female Spectatorship
in Contemporary Indonesia**

Rachmah Ida

**Potret Kekerasan Gender
dalam Sinetron Komedi di Televisi**

Liestianingsih Dwi Dayanti

Politik Media, Demokrasi dan Media Politik

S. Aminah

Masalah Organisasi Evaluasi Pembangunan

Gatot Pramuka

**Cerminan Etika dalam Hubungan Antar-Manusia:
Analisis pada Beberapa Ornamen Candi Suku**

Djoko Adi Prasetyo

Etika Sosial dalam Novel Kawin Kontrak:

Analisis Karya Saifur Rohman

Heru Supriyadi

Resensi Buku

**Formasi Dan Struktur Gerakan Sosial Petani:
Studi Kasus Reklaiming/Penjarahan atas Tanah PTPN XII
(Persero) Kalibakar Malang Selatan**

Doddy Sumbodo Singgih

MASYARAKAT KEBUDAYAAN DAN POLITIK

Diterbitkan oleh Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik Universitas Airlangga, sebagai terbitan berkala tiga bulan sekali yang menyajikan tulisan-tulisan untuk lebih mempopulerkan ilmu kemasyarakatan ke tengah khalayak peminat dan untuk membuka forum belajar-mengajar yang lebih efektif

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Pengantar Redaksi

Tidak dapat disangkal lagi bahwa peran dan pengaruh media massa baik media elektronik maupun cetak sangat besar hingga mampu menyihir penikmatnya. Mulai dari anak-anak, remaja, dewasa, ibu-ibu rumah tangga, serta pria dan wanita tidak luput dari sasaran pengaruh media massa. Tidak hanya itu, ternyata kehadiran berbagai tayangan yang diliput oleh media massa telah memiliki segmentasi peminat yang pada akhirnya bila dipetakan sebagai contoh penikmat sinetron, telenovela maupun tayangan sejenis adalah kaum wanita, terutama ibu-ibu.

Salah satu contoh media yang dikupas adalah televisi. Televisi merupakan salah satu kotak ajaib yang mampu membuat penonton tertawa, menangis, haru bahkan bisa saja sampai menjurus pada pembunuhan. Pendek kata media televisi merupakan salah satu media pembelajaran yang efektif dan efisien, hal ini cocok sekali karena budaya masyarakat Indonesia masih dalam tataran budaya bertutur belum dalam taraf budaya baca. Apalagi media televisi memiliki efek keserempakan, artinya dengan sekali tayang pesan akan dapat ditangkap oleh ratusan bahkan ribuan pemirsa dalam waktu sekejap, fenomena ini baik sekali bila digunakan oleh para penjual iklan. Diharapkan dengan tayangan iklan akan mampu meraup keuntungan yang dapat berlipat ganda.

Tentu saja efek tayangan media televisi maupun media yang lain ada sisi negatif maupun positifnya. Sisi positif cukup banyak, namun yang hendak diketengahkan dari berbagai artikel yang telah dihimpun redaksi adalah selain sisi positif adalah sisi negatif terutama tayangan yang bersifat kekerasan terutama kekerasan terhadap perempuan yang dilakukan oleh institusi media. Berbagai bentuk kekerasan gender dapat dijumpai dalam bentuk tayangan iklan, sinetron, berita, komik, film dan sebagainya. Kekerasan ini dalam bentuk penggambaran yang tidak adil pada kelompok perempuan.

Pada saat yang bersamaan peran media massa menjadi perpanjangan tangan kepentingan penguasa. Dengan menggunakan bahasa politik yang bermakna ganda, misalnya untuk tujuan penghalusan maupun untuk kepentingan memperdayakan warganegara, keduanya adalah bagian dari politik hegemoni sebagai syarat untuk mengukuhkan kuasa penguasa.

Dari gambaran di atas, redaksi pada tema edisi No. 3 bermaksud mengupas permasalahan seputar *Media Massa, Demokratisasi dan Etika Sosial* selain terdapat berbagai tulisan di luar topik utama. Beberapa topik utama antara lain: Audience, Viewing Practice and Female Spectatorship in Contemporary Indonesia diuraikan oleh Rachmah Ida; Liestianingsih Dwi Dayanti mencoba untuk menjelaskan tentang Potret Kekerasan Gender dalam Sinetron Komedi di Televisi; dari segi politik Siti Aminah memaparkan

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Harapan redaksi semoga keberadaan *Masyarakat, Kebudayaan dan Politik* ini dapat memberikan alternatif pemecahan masalah sekaligus menjadi media interaksi yang dapat menjembatani para ahli, ilmuwan sosial, pemerhati masalah sosial-politik dan berbagai pihak terkait dalam mengkomunikasikan gagasan serta ide demi perbaikan proses pembangunan serta perkembangan masyarakat yang senantiasa berubah.

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AUDIENCE, VIEWING PRACTICE AND FEMALE SPECTATORSHIP IN CONTEMPORARY INDONESIA

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Abstrak

Artikel ini menjelaskan hasil studi yang mengupas fenomena tentang praktik budaya menonton pada komunitas kampung dan bagaimana mereka menggunakan televisi dalam kesehariannya. Studi ini juga dilakukan sebagai kontra argumen dan pandangan para produser media (televisi) di Indonesia tentang penonton yang pasif. Hasil dari studi ini menunjukkan bahwa ternyata penonton televisi bersifat dinamis, aktif dan memperlihatkan perilaku budaya yang tidak monoton dan pasif. Dengan mengupas fenomena perempuan kampung menonton tayangan sinetron dan representasi figur-figur perempuan dan konstruksi realitas sosial kaum perkotaan di televisi, studi ini telah mendemonstrasikan bagian lain dari komunitas penonton televisi khas Indonesia masa tahun 2000-an.

Kata-kata Kunci: *budaya menonton televisi, komunitas kampung, konstruksi realitas sosial, kaum perkotaan*

Since the first broadcast of Indonesian national television in 1962, television has become a massive cultural institution whose presence can be felt in almost all aspects of social life in the country. With the introduction of satellite, video, and recently video compact disc within the everyday life of the Indonesian people (*rakyat*), the presence of television has become even more ubiquitous and prominent as an object of socio-political and cultural concern. Since the establishment of the private television stations, and now with ten national-private channels and the longstanding state channel, TVRI, plus increasing number of local-private and community channels across the archi-

pelago, the Indonesian television industry has become a booming entertainment business throughout the country (see Faizal, 2002). Moreover, the impact of mass media in Indonesian society is diverse and complex: "the picture is not a totalising one of passive audiences simply soaking up consumerist values and glamorous 'global' imagery" (Hatley, 1999:270). However, in public discourses, popular and academic articles published in newspapers and journals, criticisms of the features of the national television industry mainly focus on the economics of the national-private television, the moral, educational, and ideological apparatus of national television, television as the symbol of cultural decline,

or television as a cause of the a-political attitude of the society. In fact, academics, television critics, journalists, parliamentarians, advertisers, and the television producers themselves speak for and about 'the audience' (or 'the society'), but from a position of outsiders. As Ien Ang pointed out in her seminal work on audiences, there is a gap between "everyday practice and official and professional discourse" (Ang, 1991:2). According to Ang, the lack of understanding of the everyday realities of audience occurs because the knowledge about television audiencehood has been colonized by "the institutional point of view" (Ang, 1991:2). She continues:

"In the everyday realm, living with television involves a heterogeneous range of informal activities, uses, interpretations, pleasures, disappointments, conflicts, struggles, compromises. But in the considerations of the institutions that possess the official power to define, exploit and regulate the space in which television is inserted into the fabric of culture and society, these subjective, complex and dynamic forms of audiencehood are generally absent; they disappear in favour of a mute and abstract construct of 'television audience' onto which large-scale economic and cultural aspirations and expectations, policies and planning schemes are projected, allowing these institutions to realize their ambitions to govern and control the formal frameworks of television's place in contemporary life".

Taking my cue from Ang's propositions, this study looks at the cultural details of how people (urban *kampung* inhabitants) deal with popular television and other advanced audio-visual technologies such as video compact disc (VCD) in the realm of everyday life of a contemporary

marginalised community. If the institutional (private television stations) construction of the (national) audience promotes television as a "home theatre" that promises family togetherness and shelter from the evils of urban life, then the dynamic forms and complexity of neighbourhood communality and consumption seem to be absent from the institutional viewpoint. This thesis, thus, explores the practice of 'communal television viewing,' which characterizes the cultural practice of television consumption in certain Indonesian contexts. In audience studies, broadly speaking, there has been a shift of theoretical or methodological paradigm from a focus on the importance of media effects on individuals using a linear model, to a focus on the active audience using audience ethnography, drawn from the knowledge tradition of anthropology. Moreover, challenging the approach of social sciences research, particularly in communication and media/cultural studies, my study extends the field of audience ethnography developed in a Western context, particularly studies on television viewing (e.g. Morley, 1980, 1986; Lull, 1986; Ang, 1989, 1991; Press, 1991) into an Indonesian sphere.

The selection of urban *kampung* milieu and the *kampung* female viewers as the subject of this research is based on the consideration that there has been very little research on media reception in relation to 'identity politics' of the *kampung* communities in the Indonesian context. I took the fieldwork in one crowded *kampung* resettlement of Gubeng subdistrict in Surabaya. As *kampung* people have existentially engaged in fashioning their own lives neither as rural subjects nor urban/city subjects, their narratives in responding to televised images and repre-

sentations (of women in particular) shape the particularity of the cultural scene of these marginalized subjects. Taking up their social economic background and the particularities of socio-cultural circumstances of the *kampung*, this present study takes a close look into the day-to-day communal viewing practice of the *kampung* female viewers of the most-watched local program on Indonesian television, that is *sinetron* (television drama). Furthermore, these local features are also expected to distinguish the unique cultural practices and to demonstrate the strength and resilience of non-Western cultural experience with the media forms and texts as a valuable complement to Western-based media consumption studies.

Television and Its Audience in Indonesia: Background Overview

For more than thirty years Indonesian television functioned primarily to reinforce the ideological constructions promoted by the New Order with a view to preserving national identity and unity. TVRI (Television of Republic Indonesia) in particular was utilised by the regime to promote those concepts and ideals necessary for national integrity and political stability. Kitley argues that television in Indonesia is best understood as part of the political "national culture project" (Kitley, 1998:4). He also demonstrates how Indonesian television dramas, particularly, served as the medium to construct the idealised Indonesian subject and reinforce national identity and unity (Kitley, 1998 & 2002). Television programs, like other Indonesian cultural performing arts and media, were also used to promote the local and national processes of citizenship and identity formation

(Creese, 2000).

While the level of government interference in the media has declined since the end of Soeharto's New Order era, the influence and power of the capital holders, the so-called media barons, is crucial in the Indonesian television industry. The economic motive is greatly emphasised in national programming policies and patterns. The higher the rating of a program, the more similar programs are produced and screened. National programs, thus, appear uniform and monocultured and thus unable to cater for class tastes and viewing choice. The role of television (as other commercial media) in Indonesia has been an issue of continued debate. This is mainly due to the dual role of television as a commodity in the neo-liberalised market, on the one hand; and its continued role as the moral agent and pedagogical medium in the process of development, on the other hand. Positioning within these unresolved dualities, Indonesian television in the first decade of the 21st century is characterised by unprecedented market-driven competition and ownership concentration by certain media magnates and groups.

The concept of 'supermarket television' has appeared as the common term used to refer to the system of private television broadcasting. Like a supermarket, private television stations offer a whole "department" (entertainment, information, education, and so forth) as commodities of one overall complex with an expectation that consumers will choose only particular products, which the station will then reproduce for ongoing consumption. Moreover, the concentration of the media (television) in the hands of those whose economic power determines the very base of

their institutions, often results in the programming formats and contents, and to a certain extent, the 'culture-producing industry' at large, being directed by this economic determination. Nowadays, with a more liberal media atmosphere in the country, the regulations for cross ownership in the media appear to be loosened. Debate about the dangers of media conglomeration, thus, seems to be much less important than the debate on the fact that "*sinetron* does not educate a nation" (*sinetron tidak mendidik bangsa*).

In line with that, the national audience, the targeted market of those capitalised television institutions, is defined and utilised as a key feature for legitimising ratings of the television businesses. *Sinetron* as the most-watched type of show for more than a decade in Indonesia, is not only a distinctive mark of domestic television productions, but also had become a focus of political contest during the New Order era and of economic competition for audiences to attract advertising revenues. *Sinetron* ratings have been utilised as a barometer to measure audiences. In fact, the producers and the private stations do not know exactly the actual audience. A *sinetron* is produced initially as a trial product. If many viewers watch the show, the *sinetron* will be continued for as long as it attracts significant numbers of viewers and, more importantly, the advertisements. Therefore, the audiences (i.e. the masses) are presumed to be the economic subjects, imagined as passive and in pursuit of pleasure. Private television stations and the *sinetron* producers appear to think only of the commercial aspects of their productions. These industrial institutions are unable to give meaning to the narratives and images

produced in a way that the audience finds of significance in communal life. The television producers fail to imagine *sinetron* audiences as active community members of the nation-state.

Television Viewing and Class Cultures in Indonesia

Television in Indonesia has rapidly developed since the 1980s, both in number of television sets and in the consumption habits of Indonesians (Sen & Hill, 2000). Sen and Hill (2000:114) cite data from BPS (Central Bureau of Statistics) that indicate that in the late 1980s more Indonesians watched television than read printed media and listened to the radio. A television set for many Indonesians is seemingly a mandatory purchase; even the poorest make efforts to afford one. Nilan (2000) observed that television is an important entertainment medium for the people both in urban and rural areas of Indonesia. According to a BPS survey in 2001, in a population of over three hundred million aged ten years and over, 87.97 percent of people watch television, while only 17.47 percent read newspapers/magazines and about 43.72 percent listen to radio (BPS, 2002). Moreover, the 1995 data from BPS showed that more women watched television (52,7 percent) than read newspapers (15,7 percent), while about 48,4 percent of women listened to the radio (*Cakram*, April 1996 cited in Abar, 1998:237).

Beyond such numerical concerns, television viewing is importantly a cultural practice. "How we watch television is therefore part of the cultural context in which programs, commercials and other televisual paraphernalia are placed"

(Lewis, 1991:49). As such we need to get beyond quantifying or counting the number of people watching the programs and/or surveying the effectiveness of the television contents on viewers and turn to ethnographic accounts of domestic and family contexts of television viewing or the communal use of television programs, particularly by specific groups (housewives, working class women, middle class professionals, and so forth). Communal viewing in Indonesia is distinctly different from the everyday cultural practice of television consumption in the West. Communal television viewing occurs in a range of public spaces in Indonesia. People watch television in small food stalls or at small stalls selling cigarettes and sweets, and in other public places. In Surabaya, where I live, even in a doctor's surgery a television set is not only placed in the waiting room for the patients, but another is also placed on the veranda for the patients' chauffeurs, the taxi drivers, *becak* (trishaw) drivers, and the food sellers outside. Such communal media consumption is commonly seen in other major cities. The saying that "we live in a media-saturated world" is now a platitude in the millennium quotidian of Indonesia. Television screens adorn public places everywhere from private-exclusive rooms to the public-outdoors spaces.

Mark Hobart (1999) has acknowledged from his field trip in Bali between 1988 and 1989, when he found that people in Bali preferred to stay at home and watch television rather than visit for a chat as they had in the past (Hobart, 1999: 267). In a different place, however, the *kampung* people in Surabaya that I observed call in to neighbour's place for watching television and a *chat*. Watching

television programs together with non-family members is commonly practiced in urban *kampung* areas. It is common for the people to watch television and/or a VCD in their neighbour's home even though they have their own television set at home. Chatting and gossiping are the most common habitual actions in this neighbourly interaction. While watching television programs together, people have conversations not only about what is going on in the television program that they are watching but also about their particular neighbours, friends, or anything else of interest. In 1999, Pam Nilan, an anthropologist, explored the television viewing practices of Balinese women in her 'micro-practice' study of two Balinese women, the working mother and her maid. Nilan demonstrated how these female viewers, carrying their identities, dealt with the representations of gender shown in television dramas. Nilan (2001) concluded that both the representations of gender and the female viewers engagement with these 'textual representations' were influenced by class and "fractured by religious and political tension" (Nilan, 1999:95).

Television in the *Kampung* Space and Place

As the fit between civil society in the West and the non-Western societies is partial, the distinctive cultural formations and the local context of community that I observed and the information gathered during the fieldwork have offered alternative understandings about cultural consumptions and television viewing experiences in the Indonesian context. Differences become more marked if we look at the preoccupation of television in Indonesia and the

distinctive form and content of some local/domestic productions. Nevertheless, the distinctiveness should not be exaggerated here; rather, the *kampung* cultural practice of television viewing is a contemporary conduct of the *rakyat* ('little people') in the 21st century quotidian Indonesia. Ninety percent of households in the *kampung* have a TV set. It is a 'show piece', which is not only perceived as a valuable family asset, but also carries the symbolic meaning for asserting the family status among the community. Television is not just a technology and part of the domestic interior of the house. The consumption itself is a cultural activity, and operates as a kind of cultural symbol of everyday life of a particular section of society. Television is placed centrally in the living room, where it is not only integrated into the interior design of the house, but is also integrated in one way or another into the family's wider social relationships with the *kampung* community.

Television in the *kampung* is not just a technology and part of the domestic interior of the house; the consumption itself is a cultural activity integrated into the wider social relationships within this class community. Community norms and cultural experiences of the communal are conveyed not only in arranging the place of the television set, but also in the ways the audiences consume the texts. *Kampungs* are communities in urban Indonesia are deplored by several non-*kampung* groups as lower class, traditional, old-fashioned, backward and oppressive. *Kampung* communities are also associated with 'little people' that do not engender fellowship with 'big people' or upper classes and with non-*kampung* folks. The *kampung* in-

habitants articulate ideas and images about 'wong kampung' (people of *kampung*) into their own desires, lives, and interpretations of both their subjective and communal/neighbourhood experiences. All these features have made them rich sites of the communalised cultural practices of watching television. The TV set is obtrusively positioned within the open lounge interiors and has a decorative value for the *kampung* households in urban Surabaya. The TV set is one of the display pieces of the "household arts," suggesting the set is regarded as not only a utilitarian object or as a technology which is problematically associated with a particular class taste, but also that it has a socio-economic function for every household in this community. Since watching television is preferably enjoyed in a communal setting either with family or neighbours, it is common in many *kampung* houses for the parents, children, nieces, and other relatives to sleep together in front of the TV set rather than in their bedrooms. This feature suggests distinctive class patterns of ways of enjoying the television and taste in living room layouts. Television has also transformed the function of the living room and has added the display of consumer goods in the house for social class contestation. The arrangement of the display of television set has given a particular shape to the emerging ideology of domesticity in the migrant middle to lower class community context. The whole association of decorative objects across the room suited to the persistence of TV set make these objects interconnected elements of a coherent set of the *kampung* domesticity.

Television audiencehood in Indonesia, with particular class community, there-

fore, is a pervasive social and cultural reality in the contemporary 'television-scape'. The dynamic complexity of cultural practices and experiences of watching television among the *kampung* community is not simply a study of "audience response." Rather, this complexity is evidence for the richness of cultural analysis compared to the taxonomic thinking in counting or surveying the nominal identities of the audience.

Gendered Realm and Female Spectatorship

This section looks at how the conflation of women's work (as domestic labour) and leisure take place around the space of the TV set. These issues addressed here are an attempt to extend the previous discussion of TV's placement and ways of looking by bringing the issue of gender into focus. In most homes I visited, the male(s) and children in the home dominate decisions in changing the TV channels, or the use of VCD player or the game console. Kampung women declared that they did not have any specific choice of TV programming and watches any program showing when their family turns on the TV. If their husband, for instance, watch soccer (the favourite sport for many Indonesians), women do not mind watching it, though they watch for only a short time then falls asleep. Several women in the *kampung* follow a similar pattern. When the same *sinetron* favourite is broadcast, these women gather in the home of one of them and watch the show together. This is usually done in the house of a widow or a woman whose husband lives with his first or second wife outside *kampung*. So, a female space is created

in a place where there is no adult authoritative male.

However, for a family with no male, the dominance of an adult woman in the house is significant. The control over viewing television appears to correlate with the person who earns and holds income in the house. However, within the family circle, not only women like to watch *sinetron*. The males also like to watch the shows, particularly action-legend dramas or mystery (e.g. *sinetron* titles *Angling Dharma*, *Mistery Gunung Merapi* (Mystery of Mount Merapi)), crime series, and teenage dramas. Except for youth dramas, which only teenage males seem to watch, all the family members gather around the TV set to enjoy these local programs. In this situation, still, the male(s) hold the control to switch over the channels during advertisements. In everyday *kampung* life, the TV world is very much women's only during the daytime, when school children and the husband and other males have gone out. *Kampung* people rise early. By the time the sun is up the place is a hive of noisy activities and sounds from televisions or radios. People usually prepare for the working day between 6 and 8 am. As such, women start to prepare meals for their husband and children much earlier, often before 6 am. The domestic duty continues until midday, when women prepare the family's main meals for the day. Often, women bring the ingredients like vegetables in front of the TV set. They watch the morning programs such as the quiz shows or Indian films, while preparing foods or doing other domestic chores. Sometime female neighbour(s) come to join and share jobs with the host. At that time, those young married women confide in each other about their family members

and sometimes about their sex lives, about their menstrual cycles, pregnancies, births, their joys and worries, and so forth, (even bowel movements) while they watch television. Sometimes, they talk about their neighbours' secrets and problems, or the *kampung* politics, or their conflict with other neighbours. The TV space becomes the female context only when the children and the male(s) are not present. A similar pattern is much less clear for the *kampung* males.

Television, thus, plays a part in shaping women's communal relationship in this migrant community. This technology has created the forum for women to socialise and share their sorrows, joys, and their private experiences with other women. Television has also facilitated the possibility for women to create women's webs, which may differ from and sometimes even oppose each other. Viewing television among women in the *kampung* cannot be separated from the social activity involving ongoing talk among them, with the performance of a domestic activity such as preparing the foodstuff for the family meal, or caring for their small children. Moreover, for women who mostly spend their time on domestic obligations, the moment of watching television, especially in the daytime, alone without doing anything else would be boring and of course waste time better spent on their domestic obligations. Since watching television in the daytime surely creates more of a space and time for women to entertain and enjoy the program without disruption from males and children, the obligation to finish domestic duties needs to be combined with the pleasures of watching.

Women are struggling to negotiate an independent space and time of their

own in relation to the television viewing consumption within the domestic space. Their experiences of everyday television consumption are patterned by intersecting power and domestic responsibility. Nevertheless, women find their own way in entertaining themselves with the television. Their practices of television consumption illustrate one of the ways in which the home and the space in front of the TV set are culturally produced and sustained. Women are relegated to a passive position when the other entertainment technology, the VCD is also found in the home (as can be seen in several pictures above, TV and VCD sets are placed side by side). The use of VCD in the *kampung* home is incorporated within the social organization of the relations between the public and private spheres and within the domestic sphere itself. It also poses a crucial question about its articulations with gender relations, particularly within the determining effect of the structure and size of the domestic space available. With restricted physical environment, the aural landscape created by the use of VCD in the *kampung* household brings to the surface the significance of the gendered organization of domestic space. Morley (1986) found in his work *Family Television* that multi-set technology like video (VCR) is primarily used by the males of the family.

Morley (1986) states that father and sons, occasionally daughter and least often mother, are in control of this video technology within the household. A related argument was developed by Lull (1988) who notes the "masculinization of the VCR" suggests that the emergence of video as a "new" household technology requires "extension of the masculine roles of in-

stalling and operating the machine." Therefore, the responsibility to operate the machine becomes "a kind of male pleasure" (Lull, 1988:28-29). Although, in this study, I did not investigate the depth of "extension of masculine role" in relation to the VCD machine, I believe the lesser engagement of those *kampung* women with the VCD player is because their daily time is not only mainly consumed for routine domestic work and child caring, and chatting with neighbours, but also there is a technological competence occurring in this context. As in most work on women and technology, women historically do not dominate the latest technology. Mainly technologies/toys are male designed and, therefore, more 'boys' toys' than female ones (Wacjman, 2004).

Therefore, the gendered realm in front of the television set appears to be dominated by the males and children. Yet, television has been able to facilitate the formation of women's daytime webs and offers a distinctive mode of socialising among the *kampung* women in this context.

Television and Women's Culture

Indonesian women have often been thought of as a problem, as the focus of attention of the growing 'gender and women's studies' in the country. The vast majority of literatures, which are mainly activist or descriptive academic works, investigate the woman (in her representation) and the media as a problematic media object in a patriarchal system. The notions circulated among the media and feminist critics in Indonesia often see television's representation of women as negative. The suggestions are, thus, that

television should represent women in a positive way, or that women should be represented in such a way that positive role models are presented for the society. For *kampung* women, culture and politics are always close to home and take place in the context of everyday life. For them as well, leisure time within their domestic place and *kampung* lane at all times means television and neighbourhood chatting. With doors open, the practices of watching television and consuming pleasure are not restricted to the individual alone, but take place in the communal neighbourhood context. This distinctive practice seems to be neglected or unknown by the television producers and programmers. Both the producers and the TV stations seem to assume that women have control of the set most of the time, especially in the day time. In fact, the *kampung* women have limited access and time to spend in front of the set, as domestic tasks occupy them and their men and children dominate the televisual space.

Watching *sinetron* among the *kampung* women is not merely an individual pleasure activity. In the process of making meaning of the fictional televised texts, the viewers often try to connect the televisual constructions to their *kampung* cultural realms in order to make the texts more significant for them and more pleasing to watch. Thus, these *kampung* women viewers, culturally conscious or not, have been practising the so-called 'feminine discourse' (see Brown, 1990:190) while watching television. This 'feminine discourse', in this sense, holds the prospect of empowerment for its feminine subjects. The *kampung* women viewers in fact, are not drawn into excessive enjoyment with the television soaps

(*sinetron*) and the idealised fictional figures of women and the society presented in the shows. As the discourse of pleasure for women is overlaid with a discourse that deems *sinetron* to be rubbish – and therefore, this discourse has denigrated the women watching soaps (*sinetron*) – and consequently puts women viewers in a very uncomfortable position. Thus, the way the *kampung* women consume and assess the images and attitudes articulated in the *sinetron* texts has challenged the uncomfortable views embedded in the notion of 'feminine pleasure' with the feeling that women cannot win since dominant (i.e. social patriarchal construct) discourse gives them one message, while their life experiences give them another (see e.g. Allen, 1985; Brown, 1990; Modleski, 1982). The *kampung* women have taken their initiative and looked for their own spaces in the system where they can speak from their own subject positions.

Kampung women viewers do not emphasise realism in making their television viewing choices. Rather, they criticise and question the construction of the women's images and characters in the *sinetron* texts to reflect the existence of contemporary Indonesian women in the reality. For instance, the creations of images of contemporary city girls are not seen as offering new transgressive possibilities or the formulation of 'new' Indonesian women's identities; quite the contrary, the creations are seen as opposing the conventional (if not stereotypical) images of Indonesian women. The portrayals of contemporary urban young women, thus, invite the viewers to resistant and look distantly. Moreover, the characterisations in the *sinetron* texts are

recognised as offering different types of persons, but they are not adaptable for the processes of identification among those *kampung* women spectators. The mode of watching visual representations among the *kampung* women viewers offers a distinct feature of communalised practice of mobility, which allows women (as a collective) to share their private viewing experience with neighbours and acquaintances either in their homes or the neighbours' places. In many works on viewing practice, the individuated experience is more pervasive than the communal shared practice. In this communal viewing practice, the spectator, whose individual identities seem to have been dissolved and become a collective uniqueness, could take their private imaginations and fantasies 'outdoors' (in the public/communal homes).

Conclusion

Theories and literatures on Cultural Studies tend to reinforce the ideology of the media consumer as one with individual power to make their own readings of television texts (Fiske, 1987). Audience studies of film and television, particularly Stuart Hall's (1980) essay on 'encoding/decoding' have also offered theoretical insight and empirical evidence to suggest that the audience (or individual) do not necessarily understand the texts in the same way as the television makers of the texts — or even the state's intention to control the messages — intend. These earlier studies on television audience tend to pay attention on the process of individual decoding of the televised texts, and have not yet touched the complexity of the social macrocosm — i.e. the socio-economic realm

and cultural environment of the community within which the individual lives — influencing the reception process. Moreover, the earlier researches have tended to ignore some of the determining conditions (e.g. religion and ethnic beliefs, local norms and values of the community) of this social macrocosm.

In the urban *kampung* community, as I observed for this study, the processes of television viewing and meaning-making of the televisual texts are not merely the process of individual experience, but draw connections to the communal experiences in the neighbourhood interactions. I have demonstrated that the communal audiences tend to take the fictional forms of the television images and figures to be linked not to their individual position (as a singular subject), but as related to their community shared experiences about the neighbours, the socio-economic realm and

their own *kampung* cultural geography. The narratives of neighbourhood life in the viewers community context are much more important and significant to the communal subjects than the fictional realm created in the television series or serials.

Framed by Western literatures and perspectives related to the studies of audience and television uses mainly from cultural studies and media anthropology traditions, this study shows that the practice of watching television in Indonesia is a distinct and complex everyday communal mode of practices. In this study, I demonstrate that the cultural practices of television uses and the meaning making processes of, particularly, urban (female) *kampung* viewers offer various and multifaceted patterns, interpretations, and a typical cultural practice of 'watching television,' which is communal, localised, and autonomous.

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