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## **Producing the local: Javanese performance on Indonesian television**

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## **Part III**

### **Mediating the local: Javanese performance on local television**



## Introduction<sup>230</sup>

Today defining, celebrating and defending the local has become the stuff of innumerable newspaper articles and editorials, seminars, television talk shows and neighbourhood conversations. (Hatley 2004:63)

Having focused on representations of tradition (Part I) and the localizing of persuasion (Part II), this part of my dissertation examines localizing practices and representations of the local by and on local television stations, and the discourse about this topic. Both private and public television in the Special Region of Yogyakarta will be scrutinized, with a few sideways glances cast at local television elsewhere in Indonesia. Special attention is paid to representations of Javanese cultures, within the constraints of and opportunities offered by these new local broadcasting industries. My first contention is that the concept of 'the local' acquires meaning in the mediating practices of the local television stations. The second that, because of their commercial interests, local television stations do offer a much more diversified representation of Javanese identity in the content of their programmes than used to be the case under the New Order regime or than is acknowledged in contemporary public discourse led by local intellectuals.

In Chapter 9, I sketch the emergence of a whole new local broadcasting industry in Yogyakarta, that offered opportunities to counter existing monopolies by representing local cultures. Some insight into the regulation of local broadcasting is indispensable to pinpointing the issues at stake. In Chapter 10, I introduce an approach to the production of the local that differs from the approaches in the first two parts. Having zoomed in on a specific Javanese performance genre (kethoprak) in Part I and analysed the agents involved in the production of the local in Part II, the localizing strategies will now take centre stage. I discuss the localizing strategies of the newly established Jogja TV and relate them to the practices of the long-standing TVRI Jogja, that (as TVRI Stasiun Yogyakarta) had been broadcasting local productions since 1965. In some instances, I refer to other local Javanese TV stations whenever a comparison is useful. The conclusions to the Chapters 9 and 10 will be presented in Chapter 11. They form the prelude to my reflections on the key concepts – the local, proximity and tradition – on the basis of the outcome of this study. But first I would like to dwell once more on the concept of the local.

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<sup>230</sup> My paper 'Mediating the local: Representing Javanese cultures on local television in Indonesia,' based on Part III, was presented at the 7th Asian Graduate Forum on Southeast Asian Studies (Singapore, the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, 18-20 July 2012); in a reworked version it was published in *JSEAS* 48-2 (June 2017):196-218.

### *Looking into the local*

The heightened awareness of local identity fostered by regional autonomy and the ideology of participatory democracy (Hatley 2008:53, 66) in this era was new. Under the New Order the development of a national Indonesian identity had been extensively promoted by the government and national television. As I have shown in the Introduction to this dissertation, the idea of Java (and the other Indonesian regions) as ‘a single comprehensible entity’ (Antlöv and Hellman 2005:4) with a homogeneous Javanese culture ignored the various Javanese sub-cultures and identities. The changes that took place at the end of the twentieth century were the catalyst that allowed the expression of a variety of local identities on television.<sup>231</sup> The local still remained a contested concept within the context of television in Indonesia and, before tackling the mediating of the local in the new era, some reflection is required.

Two fundamental questions need to be addressed to straighten this out. Firstly, we should ask what is meant by local in the context under scrutiny. Then we should go a step farther and investigate how television, a global medium, becomes local – in a sense to be clarified later in this introduction. In the first question, the local emerges as a multifaceted concept. As I argued in Chapter 1, it can be used in reference to both the national, and the local/regional – meaning sub-national, regional or sub-regional, after which its meanings are honed by political, ideological, geographical and other factors. As a category of legislative practice, the local is used in the Indonesian Broadcasting Law as one of the markers to define and regulate broadcasting. I shall return to this issue when discussing the 2002 Broadcasting Law in Chapter 9.

My second question ponders the localizing processes of the television industry. Studies of the localizing of media products often perceive the local as national. Both Kitley (2004) and Coutas (2006) discuss the localization of foreign formats in Indonesia on the national level. The term indigenization as used by Chan and Ma (1996) is less confusing. Nevertheless, here I shall keep to the term localizing in the sense that television stations adapt their programmes to the cultural circumstances of the locus of Yogyakarta and to what they imagine fits the wishes and needs of their target audiences – I use the word ‘imagine’ here as the local television industry in Indonesia based its representations of the local on habit rather than on solid market research.

Work on local television and localizing processes in a non-Indonesian context – both Asian and other, as television is a global medium – has been valuable to my research as it has offered comparative views. This includes the article by Chen (2004) on domestication strategies in Taiwan, Weber’s study of the localizing of the global in China and the 2010 *Media History* issue concerning perspectives on localizing the transnational in regional television, edited by Catherine Johnson and Andreas Fickers.

In the case studies highlighting localizing strategies of TVRI Jogja and Jogja TV, I pay special attention to the workings of proximity to show how the television stations construct identity and represent local cultures. As I have explained in the Introduction to my dissertation, proximity reveals the processes taking place ‘at the local sites of cultural

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<sup>231</sup> On this topic, see also Jurriëns 2004 and Loven 2008.

production' (Winichakul 2003:6). This does not mean I shall neglect the national and global forces that are simultaneously presented and represented in local broadcasting, as these together with the local constitute a shared space (see Chapter 1; Coutas 2006:389). To find out how broadcasters use proximity and design their programmes 'so as to *relate to their audiences* in specific, inclusive, and cooperative ways' (Hutchby 2006:10-12), I have based my analysis mainly on the study of television broadcasts and the self-identifying practices of the television industry. I have related these to the materials mentioned in my Introduction – Indonesian legislative texts, articles and essays published in Indonesian newspapers and magazines, programme descriptions and broadcast schedules; interviews with local media practitioners and performing artists and the witnessing of the recording and production of several television programmes.

